

Michael Bakunin



E.H. CARR

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(From a photograph taken by Mroczkowski in 1868)

MICHAEL BAKUNIN

BY

E. H. CARR

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FRONTISPIECE

MICHAEL BAKUNIN

From a photograph taken by Mroczkowski in 1868.

BOOK I

THE YOUNG ROMANTIC

“There was in my character a radical defect: Love for the fantastic, for out-of-the-way, unheard-of adventures, for undertakings which open up an infinite horizon and whose end no man can foresee.”

MICHAEL BAKUNIN
Confession to the Tsar
(July–August 1851)

CHAPTER 1

THE BIRTH OF A REBEL

ABOUT a hundred and fifty miles north-west of Moscow, in the province of Tver, there stood—and still stands—a long, roomy, one-storied eighteenth-century house. It was built in the sham classical style imported into Russia by Italian architects and was the typical Russian country gentleman's residence. The property of which the house formed part, and which bore the name of Premukhino, was of ample dimensions. It was an estate "of five hundred souls"; for in the eighteenth century, and long after, land was commonly measured in Russia by the number of male serfs on it. Premukhino lies in agreeable, slightly undulating country, which lacks both the immense fertility and the unbroken monotony of the great Russian plain. The house itself stands on wooded ground sloping steeply down to the river Osuga—the outstanding feature of the Premukhino landscape. The Osuga is a broad, unhurrying stream. It empties into the Tvertsa, which is in turn a tributary of the Volga. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, life at Premukhino imitated the course of the Osuga. It was leisurely and spacious. It flowed towards Tver, the provincial capital, or—more remotely—towards the great Muscovite city of Moscow. Petersburg, and the world beyond of which it was the outpost and the portal, was something distant, alien, and inconceivable.

In the spring of 1779, Premukhino passed into the hands of Michael Vasilevich Bakunin, a member of a family which had long occupied a respectable but undistinguished place in the annals of the Moscow nobility. Michael Bakunin had risen to the rank of "State Counsellor" at the court of Catherine II. He was still in the prime of life when he retired to Premukhino; and though he seems to have been innocent of political ambitions or intellectual attainments, his memory was not unhonoured by his descendants. Family legend celebrated his enormous stature, his muscular prowess, and his ungovernable temper. It was recorded how, armed only with a plank of wood, he had beaten

off single-handed a band of robbers, and how he had lifted an impudent coachman from the box of his carriage and pitched him into the river.

Michael Vasilevich Bakunin had three sons and five daughters. Of the sons, the first chose an official, the second a military career. The third, Alexander, does not seem to have taken after his father; for he had brains and a delicate constitution. When he was nine—it was just before the family settled at Premukhino—reasons of health decided his parents to send him with a tutor to the softer climate of Italy. He completed his studies at the University of Padua, where he graduated as a Doctor of Philosophy; and the Latin treatise on Worms which earned him this distinction was still preserved a century later in the family archives. The next years of his life are obscure. He travelled and, according to one account, was present at the fall of the Bastille in 1789. He served for a time in the Russian Legations in Florence and Turin, and became a member of the Turin Academy. Not till he was nearing thirty did he at length return to Russia. Soon afterwards, in the third year of the new century, old Michael Bakunin died; and his widow added to the amenities of Premukhino by erecting to his memory a magnificent church.¹

For some years life flowed on uneventfully. Alexander Bakunin managed the estate, and lived quietly at Premukhino with his widowed mother and his three unmarried sisters, all noted for their piety. He enlarged the house by adding to it two new wings, and adorned the façade with a portico resting on Doric columns. But when he was already past forty, an unexpected diversion occurred. The owner of the neighbouring estate of Bakhovkino, Paul Poltoratsky, married the widow of a member of the ancient and noble family of Muraviev; and he brought to Bakhovkino, in the summer of 1810, his wife and his eighteen-year-old step-daughter, Varvara Muraviev. Varvara, beautiful, lively, and fashionable, made on Alexander Bakunin an impression as disconcerting to himself as it was surprising to the rest of the world. The middle-aged and level-headed bachelor suffered for the first time the pangs of romantic love. The difference of twenty-four years in their ages proved no obstacle to the success of the suit. The marriage took place in the autumn; and the pair spent the

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 1-9, 83; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 25-6. (The full titles of works quoted in the footnotes will be found in the Bibliography.)

winter in Tver, where the Tsar's sister, the Grand-Duchess Catherine, held a miniature court of her own. Having thus briefly indulged her taste for social gaiety, the young wife settled down at Premukhino (from which her husband's mother and sisters had meanwhile tactfully retired) to the business of bearing children. It occupied her, almost without intermission, for the next fifteen years.

The composition of the family was unusual. The first two children were girls, Lyubov and Varvara, named after their grandmother and mother respectively. Then came Michael, named after his grandfather, the Samson of family legend, and two more daughters, Tatyana and Alexandra. Then, after a brief pause, there was succession of five sons: Nicholas, Ilya, Paul, Alexander, and Alexis. As it began to grow up, the family divided naturally into two groups of five; and Michael was seen to occupy a perfect strategic position. By virtue of his sex he dominated the elder group, in which he was the only male. By virtue of seniority he towered over the younger group, consisting of his five brothers. It soon became clear that his personality fitted him for the commanding rôle which the order of his birth had assigned to him.¹

While the Bakunin family were coming into the world, dramatic events had occurred in Russia and in Europe. Varvara had lived just three weeks, and Lyubov not a full year, when Napoleon marched into Moscow at the head of the Grand Army. When Michael was born—on May 18th, 1814, by the Russian calendar²—Napoleon was at Elba; and the victorious allies, Alexander I of Russia among them, were in occupation of Paris. But this epic reversal of fortune made less stir at Premukhino than an event in Russian history which marked young Michael's twelfth year. On December 1st, 1825, Alexander I died; and three weeks later occurred in Petersburg that curious gentlemen's and officers' conspiracy, aiming rather at a constitution than at revolution, the Decembrist rising. The large clan of the Muravievs was deeply involved in the affair. One of the five ringleaders who were subsequently hanged was a second cousin of Varvara Bakunin. Two of her first cousins (who had, moreover,

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 12-17, 30, 32.

² The date corresponds to May 30th of the Western calendar, and is that of the signature of the Peace of Paris.

been frequent visitors at Premukhino) were the founders of one of the secret societies which had prepared the way for the rising.

These happenings made an indelible impression on the head of the house. Alexander Bakunin had spent abroad the twenty years which are normally the most formative part of human life. His Italian education must have made him an incongruous figure among the Russian landowning nobility of the day, who were more often distinguished by strength of will and by a capacity for the grosser forms of self-indulgence than by any degree of artistic or intellectual refinement. He had acquired something of the liberal and humane traditions of eighteenth-century Europe; and it was rumoured that he had had a certain sympathy with the revolutionary outbreaks which he had witnessed in France and Italy. But maturer years changed all that. Alexander quickly yielded to the charm of Premukhino, its woods and fields, its winding stream, its nightingales in spring, its wild roses, its cherry-blossom. The glorious repulse of the Napoleonic invasion stirred in his heart a new Russian patriotism; and the Decembrist insurrection shocked and terrified a man whose mildly liberal philosophy had never contemplated anything so awful as rebellion against the Tsar. As the children grew up, he embodied his view of life in a long poem called after the stream Osuga, which is invoked in the first stanza as "the soul of Premukhino's fields, my faithful friend and the nurse of my children". In the midst of much lyrical description of life at Premukhino, the poet develops political opinions of unimpeachable orthodoxy. He recalls with indignation the "asses' chorus of *Ça ira*" which he had heard in his youth "in the land of the fighting cocks". "And from this time", he summarily concludes, "I have hated the music of tigers and asses." He approaches with some anxiety, and with a few evident twinges of conscience, the institution of serfdom. The subject could not be avoided; for "on this unshakeable foundation Holy Russia rests". But he deprecates the name of "slavery" so hastily applied to it. There are mutual obligations, and the landowner is the "protector of the orphan". True liberty exists where "each estate has its own way of life". The serf has no more right to grumble that he is not the master than the Osuga to complain that she is not the Volga.¹

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 4, 8-11.

Such is the not unattractive picture of Michael Bakunin's father. Humane, cultured, intelligent, devoted to his home and family, but devoid of imagination, and possessed of that touch of conservative fanaticism proper to the frightened liberal, Alexander Bakunin would have no natural feeling for the rebellious instincts or revolutionary ambitions of youth. He lavished on his children a wise and far-seeing affection, and was, on the testimony of his eldest son, "unalterably indulgent and kind". But he was honestly unable to comprehend that they should have opinions or tastes different from his own. Yet notwithstanding this austere and unflinching rigidity (excused, in part, by the fact that he had reached his sixtieth year before any of his offspring emerged from adolescence), he succeeded in retaining the lasting respect even of the most rebellious of his children.

You were our teacher [wrote Michael to him many years later]. You awakened in us a feeling for the good and the beautiful, a love of nature and that love which still closely and indissolubly unites all of us brothers and sisters. Without you we should probably have been commonplace and empty. You kindled in our hearts the sacred spark of love for truth, and developed in us a feeling of proud independence and freedom. You did it because you loved us, and we were devoted to you heart and soul.¹

The lineaments of Michael's mother are fainter and altogether less impressive. It might have been expected that a woman who was actually nearer in age to her eldest children than to her husband would have been apt to take sides with the children against their father, or at any rate to act as intermediary and peacemaker between the two generations. But nothing of the sort happened. In every dispute between father and children Varvara unfailingly and unhesitatingly took her husband's part. Her conviction of his infallibility never seems to have forsaken her for a moment. She had no more sympathy than he with the children's spiritual needs and aspirations, and far less underlying tenderness. "A vain, egotistical woman", wrote Michael in later years, "and none of her children loved her." In his old age, according to one witness, he "attributed his passion for destruction to the influence of his mother, whose despotic character inspired him with an insensate hatred of every

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 27; ii. 189.

restriction on liberty". A perfect wife, Varvara Bakunin must be counted an unsuccessful mother.¹

These underlying antipathies of temperament and opinion were no bar to the growth of a strong family tradition of domestic harmony; and the later correspondence of the young Bakunins is full of sentimental retrospect about the idyllic conditions in which their childhood was passed. Alexander Bakunin had never been a self-indulgent man. There was a note of Spartan simplicity in the upbringing of the children. The luxury of the Russian country house is a figment of the popular imagination. The conditions in which the Bakunin family grew up were spacious rather than magnificent. The austerity of Premukhino is prosaically celebrated in several stanzas of *Osuga*:

The house is large but without parquet flooring; we have no expensive rugs, nor other ancestral ornaments, nor even card-tables. In one corner of the dining-room stands an old grandfather clock—my own contemporary; at the other, the ancient ivy has spread its long, broad ears. . . . No precious porcelain adorns my board, but three or four simple dishes and the bright eyes of children. . . . Hard by, in the drawing-room, is a portrait of our great Tsaritsa;² he who honours it not with a loyal glance has no drop of Russian blood in his veins. . . . The divan and carved chairs are upholstered in tapestry, and only on great holidays are the covers removed from them. But when, at the evening hour, the whole family is gathered together like a swarm of bees, then I am happier than a king.

No trouble was spared over the education of the children. They received their first instruction from their mother; and there is a charming quatrain in *Osuga* which relates how "the door opened, floor and ceiling shook, while three little ones burst in on their Mama to say that they knew their lesson". When they were a little older, their father began to teach them history (strongly tinged, one may suspect, with Russian patriotism), geography, and natural science, and in Holy Week he would read the gospels to them and explain the doctrines and ceremonies of the Church. There were French and German governesses (and perhaps English and Italian too, since Alex-

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 27; El, *Severnyi Vestnik* (May 1898), p. 179.

² Evidently Catherine the Great who reigned in his youth, but who had been dead thirty years when the poem was written.

ander prided himself that his children spoke *five* languages), and tutors in various other subjects. The girls learned the piano and Michael the violin; and singing in chorus was a favourite accomplishment and recreation. Even the girls, who were wholly home-taught, became intelligent, cultivated, widely-read women, capable of expressing themselves perfectly in two or three languages. Alexander Bakunin had learned from Rousseau to believe in education; and there was nothing slipshod or superficial about his methods.¹

But more important than any formal instruction was the bond of intimacy forged during these years between the members of the younger generation. The children—boys and girls alike—had the same warm impressionable nature; and they were united by the same passionate devotion to their home. The landscape of Premukhino gave them a store of sacred memories which they shared in common even when the circumstances of life had driven them apart.

We were born and grew up in Russia [wrote Paul afterwards], but under a clear Italian sky. Everything around us breathed a happiness such as it is difficult to find on earth.

And Michael, in the darkest moments of his career, could still conjure up out of the distant past the winding Osuga; the water-meadows and the little island where they had played in the middle of the pond; the old saw-mill with the miller fishing in the mill stream; the early morning pilgrimages through the garden while the spiders' webs were still hanging on the leaves; the moonlight walks in spring, when the cherry-blossom was in flower and brothers and sisters would sing *Au clair de la lune* in chorus; the solemn burial of Varvara's pet sparrow, for which Borchert, the German tutor, composed an epitaph; the winter readings of *The Swiss Family Robinson* round the hearth—everything that was summed up for a Bakunin in the golden word Premukhino.²

These days without a history were prolonged until the autumn of 1828. Michael was now fourteen and a half. As the eldest son, he was destined for the army; and it was decided to send him

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 31-3, 36-9.

² Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, p. 390; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 105; iv. 223-4.

to Petersburg, where he could be prepared for his entrance into the Artillery Cadet School in the following year. His departure was the first event in the history of Premukhino since the birth of the children. For the girls, the "best years" had lost something of their glory. For Michael himself, childhood was over.

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Pending his admission to the Cadet School in the following year, Michael lodged in Petersburg with his father's married sister and her husband. Uncle Nilov, who had once been governor of the province of Tambov, had little understanding of the needs of adolescent youth. He wounded Michael's pride by making him read aloud the *Cheti-Minei*, a traditional collection of the fabulous exploits of the national saints, which used to have an honoured place in every Russian nursery. Nilov thought it an improving book for a young man of nearly fifteen, and exhorted his nephew to believe every word of it; and it was this exhortation which, as Michael afterwards averred, first sapped his faith in the truths of revealed religion. A chill settled down on his heart when he found himself thus cast among strangers—far away from the "dear, familiar faces which he had loved without even knowing that he loved them". Both Aunt and Uncle Nilov were strict disciplinarians. It was perhaps owing to this circumstance that Michael duly passed his examination and entered the Cadet School in the autumn of 1829.

Michael was now in his sixteenth year. Surrounded throughout his childhood by a bevy of admiring sisters, he had acquired a taste for command and the habit of being obeyed. But he had no experience of boys of his own age; and he had no qualities which obviously distinguished him from the ruck of his comrades. Though big-framed, he was not remarkable, like his grandfather and namesake, for exceptional physical strength. He was shy and sexually undeveloped.

Hitherto [he wrote years later] my soul and my imagination had been pure and virgin, unstained by any evil. In the Artillery School I quickly came to know all the dark, filthy, nasty side of life. Even if I did not fall into the vices of which I was a frequent spectator, I became at any rate so accustomed to them that they no longer disgusted or even surprised me. I soon got into the habit of lying, because a clever lie was not counted among our cadets as a vice, but was unanimously approved.

This naïve and rather smug indictment may, perhaps, be taken at less than its face value. The only known irregularities of Michael's career as a cadet were of a financial order. He borrowed right and left—a pleasant habit which clung to him throughout his life—and gave exorbitant notes of hand to money-lenders in return for ready cash. During his three years at the Artillery School he ran up debts—apart from those which his father's friends in Petersburg quietly paid—to a respectable total of 1900 roubles. His scholastic achievements were undistinguished, though he carried away with him some knowledge of higher mathematics and a capacity for vivid and vigorous writing. Michael boasted that he never worked until the month before an examination, and then sat up all night for two or three weeks on end to make up the lost ground. It was a characteristic method. Reinforced by his native intelligence, it enabled him to pass his final examination at the end of the third year; and in January 1833 he was gazetted an ensign in the artillery.¹

The young ensign was still required to attend courses at the Artillery School. But having obtained his commission, he could live where he pleased; and he returned, after three years' interval, to the house of Uncle and Aunt Nilov with a sense of freedom regained and manhood achieved. One thing only was lacking; and this, within less than a month of his exit from the school, he had achieved. He fell in love with a distant cousin slightly younger than himself, Marie Voyekov, who was spending the winter in Petersburg. Michael became a daily visitor at the house. He read aloud to Marie while she sewed. They argued which had given more to mankind—art or music. They discussed such tender subjects as the meaning of "love, exaltation, sentiment, sensibility (which we were careful to distinguish from sentimentality), and a thousand other things". Of love in a less abstract form they do not seem to have spoken; but Marie was evidently not displeased with this high-minded wooing. When they went into society together, he reproached her with her coquettishness—and this did not displease her either. In Lent, he read to her the sermons of Massillon; and when she took her first Communion in Holy Week, dressed all in white, he was watching in the church and "praying with extasy for Marie and for his family". Once they went together to a concert, where

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 110-11; ii. 106-7.

the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven (already Michael's favourite composer) was performed. Marie was terrified at the expression on her companion's face as he listened to the music, and thought he looked as if he were "ready to destroy the whole world". Marie Voyekov must have been a perceptive young person. But presently she was carried off to the country by her aunt. "Petersburg has become a desert", wrote Michael to his sister Varvara, who was made his confidante in a letter of twenty-four pages; and the romance of first love was interrupted—never to be resumed.¹

It had, however, an immediate sequel. Aunt Nilov was less impressed than Michael himself with the immense difference between a boy of fifteen about to enter the Artillery School and a man of nearly nineteen who had just emerged from it. She still considered it her right and her duty to exercise discipline over the nephew who had been committed to her care. When she heard of Michael's attentions to Marie Voyekov, she not only protested, but forbade him to go out without her permission. Michael not unnaturally ignored the prohibition. Relations became strained. Aunt Nilov improved the occasion by reproaching him with his debts contracted at the Artillery School. Michael threw up his head and marched out of the house, vowing never to return. Since Michael Bakunin has won a place in history not as a great lover but as a great rebel, it is permissible to regard his first rebellion as a more important landmark in his career than his first love.²

About the time of his defiant exit from the Nilovs' house, he was ordered into camp for the summer training. It was a fortunate, or perhaps a calculated, coincidence; for he could not afford to keep himself in Petersburg. When the camp broke up in August he would have sufficiently long leave to return home on a visit. It was a prospect well calculated to stir his profoundest emotions. The open-air life of the camp had in itself a revitalising influence; and one night, as he was reading the verses of the fashionable poet Venevitinov, a mood of penitence, and love, and universal reconciliation swept over him.

The marvellous night [he wrote later to his father], the sky covered with stars, the trembling and mysterious light of the moon, and the

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 78-9.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 108-9.

stanzas of this great, this noble poet, moved me to the depths. I was filled with a melancholy, overwhelming happiness. Oh! I was pure and holy at that moment, I was penetrated by a sense of infinity, by a mighty flaming love for God's beautiful world and for all mankind, and especially for you, father, for my mother and my sisters.

He wrote a humbly penitent letter to his father in which he confessed his quarrel with the Nilovs and the sum of his debts. Since his annual pay, including a housing allowance, was even now only 700 roubles a year, he had no prospect of meeting his obligations and could only throw himself on his father's mercy.

At length, in August 1833, the moment of his home-coming arrived. It was nearly five years—years spent among strangers in the alien uncongenial conditions of city life—since he had last seen the familiar landscape of Premukhino, the Osuga river, and the long, low house behind it. The family were at dinner when he burst in on them. He embraced them one by one, and they spoke in trembling tones while they held him lovingly at arm's length and recognised in the grown man the features of the boy they had once known. "Such emotions", he wrote afterwards, "can be felt, but not described." The bliss was general and complete. The indulgent father took a lenient view of the young man's debts. He paid the most urgent of them to the tune of 600 roubles, and let the creditors whistle for the rest. They probably deserved no better fate. Ten years later they were still whistling for their money. By that time Michael was already out of their reach, and it was no longer a novelty for Alexander Bakunin to be dunned for the debts of his eldest son.¹

Michael's reappearance in the domestic circle was an event of capital importance in the family history. The young rebel, encouraged by his victory in Petersburg, raised the standard of revolt in Premukhino itself. Characteristically, it was as the leader and champion of his sisters that he took the field. When, three months before his return, he learned that his eldest sister Lyubov was betrothed to a Baron Renne, a cavalry officer whose regiment was stationed in the neighbourhood, Michael had displayed no particular emotion, though he had begged his sisters to tell him "all the details of an event which touches me

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 109-10.

so closely". But now, on arrival at Premukhino, he soon perceived that something was amiss in Lyubov's attitude to her betrothed. He cross-examined Varvara and Tatyana, who confided in him that Lyubov did not love Renne, but had been unable to resist the pressure placed on her by her father to accept his suit. Michael's innate tendency to rebel was as strong as Lyubov's innate tendency to submit. He had refused to tolerate in his own person the tyranny of Aunt Nilov. He was resolved not to tolerate his father's tyrannical treatment of Lyubov. He constituted himself the ringleader of the younger generation, and urged on Lyubov the sacred duty of defying her father and rejecting Renne. Sharp and unconcealed animosity divided the two generations; and Lyubov hovered, tormented and undecided, between them. Perhaps none of the combatants thought much of her feelings or paused to reflect that she was suffering more deeply and more quietly than any of them, while the struggle for her destiny was waged over her head. Of the Baron's feelings nobody thought at all.

It was a conflict, not merely of two generations, but of two centuries. If Michael carried away little else from those infatuated hours with Marie Voyekov, he retained an exalted conception of the romantic passion. In the eighteen-thirties romanticism was in the air, even in slow-moving Russia; and Michael brought the first breath of it with him to Premukhino. Man's duty was no longer to be defined by fixed laws or dead conventions. It was a duty to the divine spark within himself, to his own highest capacities; and the highest attainment of which he was capable was, by the joint verdict of youth and philosophy, love. To love was man's highest mission on earth. To give oneself without love was the sin against the Holy Ghost. From this sin Lyubov must at all costs be preserved.

For Alexander Bakunin, born far back in the seventeenth-century, all this was sheer midsummer madness. He was not only outraged that his children should arise and question his decision, but incapable of understanding what they meant. He represented the best in eighteenth-century culture. He had a rich store of family affection and a rooted mistrust of enthusiasm. He believed in sober, measured judgment, forgetting that the most momentous decision of his life—the decision to marry Varvara Muraviev—had been neither measured nor sober. He

had come to the reasoned conclusion that marriage with Renne offered the best chance of happiness for his dearly loved eldest daughter. He knew that Lyubov, left to herself, would have bowed to his opinion; and he was both hurt and amazed by the intrusion of others, not personally concerned, in an issue which lay between him and her. The sense of failure to understand his children raised his exasperation to the highest point.

The storm was still unabated when, after a "terrible scene", Michael returned to his duties in Petersburg. But distance from the scene of action did not damp the young man's ardour. He continued to bombard both Lyubov and his father with letters of protest against this iniquitous marriage. He sent to his father letters which Lyubov herself had written to him, by way of demonstrating that she did not love Renne. Most remarkable of all, he enrolled on the side of the younger generation the unbending Aunt Nilov, who wrote to her brother against the marriage. Thus assailed from all sides, Alexander Bakunin bowed his head and owned defeat. He was sixty-five. He could not compete in energy and persistence with this indomitable eldest son; and in the last resort he loved all his children too well to carry the fight against them to the bitter end. In December, after four months' agony, Lyubov was permitted to renounce her engagement. The Baron disappeared from Premukhino for ever; and his name was remembered only as a landmark in the family history.

The break in our Premukhino life [Michael wrote to his father four years later] came in the time of Renne; and it was bound to come. The opposition between past and present was then too sharp for my sisters and me not to feel it. You and mother, who had hitherto been the constant objects of their adoration—yes, adoration, for religion apart, they saw nothing higher than you—you, who had hitherto been glad and happy only when they were glad and happy, . . . you suddenly separated yourselves from them, you suddenly broke that marvellous harmony which was the admiration and envy of all who knew Premukhino. . . . We, who had until that time seen in you the personification of love for your children, did not understand, and still do not understand, what made you persecute Lyubov.

The storm passed over. Relations between parents and children resumed their even tenor. But a change had come over their spirit. The assumptions of childhood had been overthrown and

shattered beyond repair. The belief in parental infallibility had been left behind with childhood's other toys; and the time was coming in Michael's life when every other authority would in turn be judged, found wanting, and condemned to annihilation.¹

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Michael was now midway through his twentieth year, and was growing up fast. Back in Petersburg, he communicated to his sisters in Premukhino the discovery that man has "capacities of two kinds: physical and intellectual". He developed a thirst for knowledge in all its branches, and plunged into a course of "Russian history and Russian statistics". He had thrown off the inhibitions of the shy, unhappy pupil of the Cadet School, was becoming conscious of his unusual powers of attraction. He had won over Aunt Nilov. He now ingratiated himself with Nicholas Muraviev, the most distinguished living member of the great Muraviev clan, and in the autumn of 1833 was an almost daily visitor at his estate on the outskirts of Petersburg. Among Muraviev's seventeen children were three daughters of marriageable age. Michael noted with admiration their qualities of "heart and mind"; and poor Marie Voyekov was remembered only to observe how far superior to her they were in grace, beauty, and wit. But Michael's admiration remained collective and abstract. The three sisters were all delicious; and he could never bring himself to make the invidious choice between them. The episode had no sequel. But it seems to have provided food for Michael's erotic imagination; for when, fifteen years later, he began to write for his own diversion a pornographic novelette in the manner of Crebillon *filz*, its theme was the deflowering by the hero of three virgins at the instigation of their father.²

Early in 1834, a few weeks after Renne's dismissal, the curtain was abruptly rung down on the Petersburg period of Michael's life. The attractions of the Muraviev girls, if they failed to touch Michael's heart, had sufficed to distract him from his studies. A condign punishment awaited him. He was found guilty of "lack of progress and inattention throughout

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 104, 113-20; ii. 113-14; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, p. 78.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 120-26. The novelette (unpublished) is in the Bakunin dossier in the Staatsarchiv at Dresden.

the whole course of instruction", dismissed from the Artillery School, and posted to a brigade stationed at a desolate and unpopular spot on the Polish frontier. By a characteristic streak of cowardice—for least of all could he bear to be humbled before the members of his own family—Michael did not write of his disgrace to Premukhino; and his father learned of it from the official gazette and from a casual letter of Nicholas Muraviev. The culprit obtained leave to visit Premukhino before his departure. But it must have been a humiliating home-coming, and no record of its happenings has been preserved. In June Michael reached his destination—Molodechno, a small town in the province of Minsk. Having spent two months there in a summer encampment, the brigade moved to Vilna for a great military review, and in October took up winter quarters at Kartuz-Bereza in the province of Grodno.¹

The sympathy which Michael afterwards displayed for the wrongs of Poland was not engendered by this enforced sojourn on the confines of that unhappy country. It was only three years since the great Polish insurrection and the suppression of Polish liberties. But Michael was convinced that the drastic measures taken against the insurgents were "not only excusable, but indispensable". He attended two balls at Vilna and found the Polish ladies "amiable, clever, excellent dancers, and dressed, it appears, in the latest fashion". For the rest, he had little truck with Polish society, and observed that, while the landed gentry of the districts where he was quartered were Polish, the mass of the people were Russian both in customs and in speech. Throughout his career, Michael vigorously combated the claims of the Polish landlord to the eastern marches of the former Polish kingdom.

The most solid result of this period of military service was to intensify Michael's new-born taste for intellectual self-improvement. In the solitude of garrison life he was saved by "an unconscious, almost instinctive thirst for knowledge". He buried himself in such books as he could procure—works of travel, a text-book of physics, a Russian grammar (like most educated Russians of the time, he wrote French more fluently and correctly than Russian; and nearly all his letters to his

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 406; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 127, 133, 139-140; iv. 102.

family were written in French), and Capefigue's *History of the Restoration*. He studied "the history and statistics of Lithuania", and attempted to learn Polish. In Vilna he met an army doctor who was a student of German philosophy, and who gave him his first inkling of this new and vast field of human thought. But Michael was never meant to be an armchair scholar. He needed the constant exchange of ideas and the stimulus of congenial companionship; and he found himself condemned, in camp and barrack, to the constant society of men whose serious thoughts never strayed beyond the exigencies of military routine, and whose recreations were vodka and cards. Michael sought refuge from the intolerable loneliness in passionate letters to Premukhino.

I am alone here, completely alone. Eternal silence, eternal sadness, eternal home-sickness are the companions of my solitude. . . . I have discovered by experience that the charm of perfect solitude, so eloquently preached by the Geneva philosopher, is the most idiotic piece of sophistry. Man is made for society. A circle of relatives and friends who understand him and share his joys and sorrows is indispensable to him. Voluntary solitude is almost identical with egoism, and can the egoist be happy? ¹

Michael's patience was near breaking point. In January 1835 he was despatched on duty to Tver to bring up remounts for the brigade. With or without permission, he pushed on to Premukhino to embrace his parents and his sisters; and once there, amid the familiar scenes and beloved companions of his happiest years, return to the desolation of a remote Polish garrison seemed an unthinkable horror. In the last two years the wilful youth had lost all capacity to refuse himself anything on which he had set his heart. Discipline was made for cowards and weaklings, not for men of courage and ambition. He stayed where he was, pleaded an imaginary illness, and sent in his resignation. His father was unspeakably distressed. His sisters stood round him in half-shocked, half-admiring amazement. But Michael liked amazing his sisters, and had almost ceased to mind distressing his father. His unconventional behaviour could hardly pass unchallenged by the military authorities, and he had a narrow escape from arrest for desertion. But family influence intervened. The matter was arranged; and in due

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 140-42, 161-5; ii. 398.

course Michael was "dismissed the service, through illness, at his own request". He was not yet twenty-one. There was plenty of time to retrieve the false start which had been forced on him by his father's ambition to make a soldier of him. He had no plans. But he had something far more satisfying to himself: complete confidence in his star.¹

A month before Michael's dramatic return, another important event had taken place at Premukhino. Varvara, his second sister, had married Nicholas Dyakov, a cavalry officer and landowner in the province of Tver. It was, on her side, a marriage of reason rather than of passion. Dyakov was one of the worthiest, but not the wisest, of men; and probably the least wise thing he ever did was to marry into this turbulent family, which had a rough way of dealing with intruders, even when they were intelligent. For the moment, the consequences of his folly did not appear. Michael remained less than two months at Premukhino to recover from the hardships of the Polish frontier and to enjoy the equivocal position of a military deserter. In March, accompanied by Lyubov and Tatyana, he went to Moscow.²

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 404-5; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 88-9.

² Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, p. 80.

CHAPTER 2

LOVE AND METAPHYSICS

THE first important intellectual influence in Michael's life came from a young man, less than a year his senior, named Nicholas Stankevich. Stankevich was, like Michael, the eldest son of a landowner. His contemporaries bear unanimous witness to his almost saint-like character and to the quickness and subtlety of his brain. A surviving photograph portrays the finely-chiselled rather feminine features, the flowing black hair, and the dark piercing eyes, which so fascinated those who knew him. He lacked the obvious qualities of leadership, possessing neither strength of body nor strength of will. But these deficiencies constituted part of his charm. Like most weak men he had an immense need of the sympathy of others and an immense capacity to inspire it; and by a rarer combination of gifts, his capacity to feel sympathy for others was not less great. Men and women fell irresistibly in love with him. In his short life he is not known to have had an enemy. His importance in Russian history, and in the biography of Michael Bakunin, is twofold. He was the first noteworthy Russian romantic; and he was the bold pioneer who opened to Russian thought the vast and fertile continent of German metaphysics.¹

Russian romanticism has a distinctively German ancestry. Romanticism had sprung up in Germany, at the turn of the century, in a moment of stagnation and depression. It was the revolt of the young nineteenth century, in the name of the abstract and the ideal, against the concrete materialism of its predecessor. It found its expression in the "blue flower" of Novalis—the mystical goal of the romantic poet's quest—and in the fantastic, supernatural stories of Tieck, Hoffmann, and Jean Paul Richter. Goethe, by a brilliant synthesis of classic and romantic, had placed the romantic dream-world in Italy. The Russians, in particular, borrowed Mignon's famous song from *Wilhelm Meister* as a symbol of romantic other-worldliness,

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 386.

of salvation through the lure of the unknown. The refrain "*Dahin, dahin liegt unser Weg*" is repeated again and again, in the correspondence of Stankevich and his friends, as a romantic catchword, and finds its last spurious echo, half a century later, in the "To Moscow! To Moscow!" of Chekhov's three provincial sisters. Romanticism meant, for the generation of Stankevich, escape from reality. And herein lay its problem. The practical everyday necessity of compromising with reality produced the characteristic dualism of the romantics—the "split nature" which continued to haunt romantic literature down to the days of Dostoevsky and still later.

The eighteenth century was a masculine age whose catchword was Reason. The motto of the new age was Love; and for the first time it exalted women (whose "innermost being", as Schlegel said, "is poetry") to the place of honour. But even here the romantic movement exhibited with peculiar vividness its inherent dualism; and Nicholas Stankevich's attempts to wrestle with this problem are typical of a whole generation. It was in 1833, when he was just twenty, that Stankevich met in his father's house the young wife of a neighbouring landowner whose half-closed, languishing blue eyes "drained his strength and his life when he gazed into them". He had sought love as the exalted communion of kindred spirits in quest of the same ideal. But when on a moonlight evening the lady led him into a summer-house in the garden and kisses were exchanged, he perceived that the egotistical emotion which swept over him had nothing in common with pure love, and he fled in terror from this first experiment in reconciling the divine with the terrestrial.¹

The scene of the second experiment was laid in Moscow. Among the young people whom Stankevich had gathered round him were the two daughters of a wealthy widow named Beyer, who had an estate in the province of Tver and was well known to the Bakunins. In Natalie Beyer, Stankevich seemed to find that pure romantic friendship which was, as he once wrote, "the best and the most sacred *species* of the *genus* love". But he was once more disappointed. After some months of high-souled communion, Natalie developed marked symptoms of restlessness and hysteria. She was a highly strung young woman of flesh and blood, and was not cast by nature for the rôle of a

¹ *Perepiska Stankevicha*, pp. 239-44; Schlegel, *Ideen*, p. 127.

saint in a spiritual partnership. The symptoms of egotistical desire and unsatisfied passion, which had so disconcerted him in the lady of the languishing blue eyes, reappeared in Natalie; and relations with her had already become difficult and embarrassing when Stankevich was tempted by fate into a third experiment. In the spring of 1834, while Michael was preparing for his exile to the Polish frontier, Lyubov Bakunin came to Moscow with her mother. In the gentle, unworldly, undemanding Lyubov, Stankevich at length saw the personification of the romantic ideal. But he was too timid to speak any decisive word. Lyubov returned to Premukhino, and Stankevich's uneasy friendship with Natalie continued. Natalie's emotions, now complicated by jealousy, became more and more turbulent, and Stankevich found himself accused by her friends, to his sincere bewilderment, of trifling with her affections. Thus matters stood when, in February 1835, Michael, Lyubov, and Tatyana came together to Moscow.¹

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The advent of the tempestuous Michael and his sisters was unlikely to calm this ruffled sea of misunderstanding and passion. But it created a diversion and produced, within a few days, some remarkable results. Now thoroughly hysterical, the jealous Natalie flashed by a sudden impulse from one extreme of morbid emotion to the opposite. If she could not be the heroine of a great love, she would become the heroine of a great renunciation. If she could not win Stankevich for herself, she would mortify herself by winning him for her friend Lyubov Bakunin. She did all she could to throw the pair into each other's arms, and followed the well-worn, but effective, device of assuring each in turn that the other's heart had been touched. Lyubov's character made her an easy victim of this dangerous game, and when she left Moscow the poison was already in her veins. Even Stankevich, though he was still afraid to confess it, began to believe that his dream of romantic love was at last to be fulfilled.²

It would be unkind, and probably unfair, to suggest that Natalie Beyer, when she performed her great act of self-abnegation, had already discovered another and more promising outlet

¹ *Perepiska Stankevicha*, pp. 221, 254-5.

² Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, p. 97; *Perepiska Stankevicha*, pp. 126-9.

for her frustrated emotions. But the discovery was not long delayed. Michael remained in Moscow for a week after the departure of his sisters. He spent this week almost uninterruptedly in the company of Natalie and her younger sister Alexandra; and before it was over, he had completely displaced Stankevich as the idol of Natalie's hysterical devotion. Natalie's choice was not *prima facie* a bad one. Anyone who had been caught in the fine-spun web of Stankevich's emotions might reasonably have sought an antidote in Michael's sturdy physique and vigorous self-assurance. Michael might well seem to the casual observer the very type of normal young man whose inclinations, once stirred, would be hampered by none of the baffling reserves of Stankevich's romantic devotion. The first approaches were promising. Michael, fresh from the humiliations of his last year of military service and of his chilly reception at Premukhino, found Natalie's ardent admiration particularly welcome. It flattered his manhood and added a cubit to his moral stature. He even went so far as to hint to Natalie that his sisters did not appreciate him at his full value, that they still regarded him as a child, and that they had no faith in the high mission which awaited him (though he was not yet clear what that mission should be). Natalie was only too eager to promise him that perfect understanding which he had hitherto missed in the bosom of his family.

Reticence was a quality not held in honour among these young romantics; and Natalie Beyer had less of it than any of them. When Michael rejoined his sisters in Tver in the middle of March, he took with him in his pocket a letter for them from Natalie.

Dear friends [Natalie had written], try and learn to know him! Throw overboard all your false views about him; believe me, we are in a better position than you to see him as he really is. . . . He is one of those whose force of character and ardent spirit can achieve much, and these qualities are all the more dangerous for him because they have long been kept under. Reflect seriously on the irreparable harm you may do him, even with all the love you bear him. If you continue obstinately to see him the being whom your own imagination has created, you will not learn to know the real Michael. . . .

Natalie did not realise into what a hornets' nest she had thrust herself. The Bakunin girls might from time to time have exer-

cised the sisterly privilege of criticising their brother. But no family was ever united by more passionate ties of mutual devotion, and for an outsider to presume to explain Michael to his sisters was as intolerable as it was ridiculous. Michael was made to blush for the indiscreet ardour of his new admirer; and a reconciliation was quickly effected at Natalie's expense. Tatyana, the fiercest and most jealous of the sisters, wrote a letter to Alexandra Beyer pouring contempt, with the frank brutality of her nineteen summers, on Natalie's nascent passion for Michael.¹

A month passed in futile recrimination. Then Michael felt it was time to take the situation in hand. Under the influence of his sisters, he had clarified his attitude to these explosive young women. He wanted the communion of the spirit. He wanted fraternal, romantic love. Above all he wanted docile, admiring disciples. He found these requirements incompatible with the exclusive, individual passion of the senses. So far his opinion coincided with that of Stankevich, and followed the well-known romantic idiom. But Michael was conscious of none of that dualism, of that conflict within himself which tormented Stankevich; and unlike Stankevich, he expressed himself in terms whose plainness left nothing to be desired. It is in this relationship with the Beyer sisters that a strain of abnormality can first be detected in Michael's behaviour. His calf-love for Marie Voyekov and flirtation with the Muraviev girls cannot be said to present any unusual feature. But from this point his sexual development is strangely arrested. In later life Michael was certainly impotent. When he was in his twenties, some of his contemporaries already suspected an incapacity of this kind; and he is not known to have had sexual relations with any woman. No explicit statement on the subject, medical or other, has been preserved. But it seems probable that his incapacity dated from adolescence, and was the psychological product of that hatred of a dominating mother of which he afterwards spoke in such passionate terms. His tumultuous passions, denied a sexual outlet, boiled over into every personal and political relationship of his life, and created that intense, bizarre, destructive personality which fascinated even where it repelled, and which left its mark on half nineteenth-century Europe.

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 152-7.

The two letters written by Michael to the Beyer girls in April (they were prudently addressed to both sisters jointly, though designed primarily for Natalie) are remarkable both for their outspoken rejection of sexual love and for their proud assumption of his own peculiar mission. If, he explained to his correspondents, he had been blinded by passion for one of them—"burning, tempestuous passion, connected with sense, not with the soul"—there might have been a danger that his love would change. But since he loved them "for their beautiful souls and their beautiful feelings", nothing could ever affect this "simple, tender relationship". Love in the other sense he had known in the past and its "burning memories" had left their mark on his heart. (This appears to be a picturesque reminiscence of Marie Voyekov.) But such love is mere egoism *à deux*.

No, my vocation is quite other. I am a man of the times, and the hand of God has traced over my heart the holy words, which embrace my whole being: "He shall not live for himself". I intend to realise this fair future. I shall make myself worthy of it. To be able to sacrifice everything to this holy purpose—that is my only ambition. . . . Every other happiness is closed to me.

Having thus defined the scope and limitations of his affection, Michael begged the sisters for their confidence. Natalie must "pour her grief into his heart and seek there strength and counsel". But lest this injunction should seem in any way exclusive, Alexandra is also invited to "give him a share in her broad, passionate heart". On this note, friendly but safe, Michael concludes his second homily. The Beyers went to the country for the summer, and there was a truce to the jarring emotions of the last few months.¹

Michael spent the greater part of the summer of 1835 at Premukhino. He reflected much on his mission, and in July wrote to Efremov, a friend of Stankevich whom he had met in Moscow:

It is will which forms the principal essence of man, when it is illuminated by the holy rays of feeling and thought. But our will is still undeveloped. It has not yet freed itself from the stifling swaddling clothes of our eighteenth century, the century of debauchery and charlatanism, of vulgarity and foolish pretensions to nobility, of scepticism in regard to everything lofty, and of petty fear of

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 165-73.

Hell. . . . No, we do not yet belong to the nineteenth century. We are still only in the transition stage between the eighteenth and the nineteenth, a tormenting condition, an interregnum between two incompatible and mutually destructive ideas. . . . The development of our will is the only solution. When we are able to say "ce que je veux, Dieu le veut", then we shall be happy, then our sufferings will cease. Until then we deserve them.

The young romantic had not yet summed up sufficient strength of will to discover his vocation. But he was sure in advance of its identity with the divine purpose.¹

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In the middle of October, Efremov and Stankevich himself spent ten days at Premukhino; and Stankevich seems to have hoped that something would happen to bring to an issue the tormenting diffidence of his feelings for Lyubov Bakunin. These hopes were disappointed. Lyubov could scarcely be expected to declare herself; and Stankevich had not the boldness to take the initiative. But the visit which ended in the emotional frustration of Lyubov was richly rewarding for Michael. The acquaintance begun in Moscow in the spring ripened into a close alliance. Michael, whose quick, insatiable brain was always fertilised by human intercourse rather than by study of books, eagerly drank in the story of Stankevich's journeyings in the new world of German metaphysics. A sound philosophic basis was at last to be found for Michael's romantic idealism.

The staple of Stankevich's metaphysical studies had hitherto been the windy and sentimental Schelling, who regarded nature, mankind, and history as different manifestations of an Absolute, identifiable with the Christian God. It was about the time of his visit to Premukhino that Stankevich came to feel the need of a more substantial diet. He turned to Kant; and the necessity of mastering the founder of modern German philosophy was the theme of many eager discussions during the ten days which he spent at Premukhino. Stankevich's first act when he got back to Moscow was to send Michael a copy of the *Critique of Pure Reason*; and throughout November the two friends, the one sitting at Moscow, the other at Premukhino, embarked together on Kant's system, exchanging their impressions in an almost

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 174-5.

daily correspondence, of which Stankevich's letters alone survive. Even Stankevich found the task difficult. "I adore Kant", he wrote, "though he gives me a head-ache at times." He evidently feared that Michael, less versed in the jargon of German metaphysics, would faint by the wayside. He begged his pupil not to spend more than three hours a day on Kant, multiplied his explanations of difficult points, and ransacked Moscow for German and French commentaries. But Michael struggled on manfully, and assured his friend that he "could not rest until he had penetrated the spirit of Kant".¹

Michael's studies were, however, interrupted by another crisis, the severest yet encountered, in his relations with his father. For many months—ever since his desertion from the army—peace had reigned in the domestic circle. Alexander Bakunin was a practical man. The past was irretrievable; and since no arrangements for the future could be made until Michael's dismissal had been officially confirmed, he left the matter alone. Meanwhile, he looked with contemptuous amusement on Michael's philosophical recreations, and thought he might have occupied himself taking his sisters to dances instead of shutting himself up like Diogenes with his books and his pipes. But when, in December, the official procedure had run its course, and Michael was a free man, the issue once more became acute. The next step must now be taken.²

It had never entered Alexander Bakunin's head that there could be any doubt about it. State service, either in a military or in a civilian capacity, was in his eyes the only creditable, or even credible, career for the son of a landowner and a gentleman. Since Michael had rejected the army, the alternative was, as a matter of course, the civil service. A few months ago, Michael had appeared to share this assumption. But since then the sense of his mission in the world had taken firm root. Stankevich had instilled into his willing ear the superiority of the contemplative over the official life. Not only did German philosophy contain the sum of all knowledge, but it might some day be necessary to pursue the quest of that knowledge in Berlin itself. "*Dahin, dahin!*" Stankevich had repeated the familiar words in a

¹ *Perepiska Stankevicha*, pp. 336, 576-97.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 176; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, pp. 404-5; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 89, 161.

letter to his friend only the month before. In the meanwhile there were the joys of student life in Moscow, which Michael, in his ignorance, had barely tasted on his last visit. It was unthinkable that he should immure himself in a bureaucrat's office and substitute administrative dossiers for the obscure but intoxicating pages of Kant.¹

The crisis came to a head when the family was assembled at Tver for the New Year of 1836. The young man's military record was no recommendation. But Count Tolstoy, the Governor of Tver, was a friend of the family, and offered Michael a post in one of his departments. The courtesy of the offer made refusal difficult; and Alexander Bakunin was growing more and more irritable with advancing years and threatened blindness. Michael shunned the issue. According to his own half-humorous account, he "took to drink out of despair" for a whole week. He even thought of suicide. Then he broke down. He lacked the courage, or the hardness of heart, to face either his father or the Count. He said no word even to his sisters. He left suddenly for Moscow, and wrote thence to his father a letter in which he renounced all thought of an official career, and declared his resolve to study philosophy and, in the meanwhile, earn his living as a teacher of mathematics.²

Alexander Bakunin was in the late sixties, and conscious of his growing infirmities. It was time that his eldest son should be ready to take his place in the family counsels and share his responsibilities. He told himself that he had never been a severe or exacting father. He had paid the boy's first debts at the Artillery School. He had borne the insubordination of the revolt against Renne. He had taken, everything considered, a lenient view of the young man's subsequent escapades. But it passed all the limits of his experience, of his patience, and of his comprehension that his eldest son, having made a mess of his military education and having all but turned deserter, should now reject with contumely the comfortable post which his father's exertions had secured for him, and propose to establish himself in Moscow without a career, without resources, without prospects, and without any intelligible occupation.

Alexander wearily took up his pen and wrote to Michael:

¹ *Perepiska Stankevicha*, pp. 572, 581.

² Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, p. 141; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 398.

I have received your letter from Moscow, and see that your head is still suffering from the same fever and that your heart is silent. Your departure surprised me less than it pained me. True philosophy consists not in visionary theories and empty word-spinning, but in carrying out everyday obligations to family, society, and country. You neglect these obligations for the pursuit of chimeras, and chatter about some "internal life" which compensates you for everything; but in the meanwhile you do not know how to escape from yourself. This dejection which weighs on you is the inevitable result of injured self-respect, of an idle life, and of an uneasy conscience. I have never been a despot. For you to fall in with my wishes would have been praiseworthy and advantageous to you; for me to fall in with yours and with your incomprehensible principles would be laughable and absurd. One way is still open to you to prove that your heart is not quite dead. Reflect, come to your senses, and be, without reserve, a good and obedient son. Efface the past by your obedience, and rather believe your blind father than your blind—call it what you will. This is my last word.

Alexander's eloquence shared the fate of most paternal remonstrances. Michael remained in Moscow, and, a few weeks later, wrote to Varvara:

Where love is, there are no obligations. Duty excludes love; and everything that excludes love is wicked and mean. For me, parents do not exist. I renounce mine. I do not need their love.¹

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 141-2; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 223.

CHAPTER 3

HIGH SUMMER OF ROMANCE

THE rivalry between the ancient and the modern capital, between Moscow and Petersburg, was a constant feature of Russian history for two hundred years. The period of the eighteen-thirties was one of decided Muscovite ascendancy. While Moscow had arisen with renewed splendour and prestige from the ashes of the Napoleonic conflagration, the Decembrist insurrection had made Petersburg the citadel of reaction. Advanced thought transferred its headquarters to Moscow, where youth could still breathe and think with some slight vestige of freedom. The University of Moscow became a hive of intellectual activity. Students formed themselves into groups or, in the terminology of the day, "circles", which soon extended their influence beyond the confines of the university itself, and created, in philosophy, in literature, and in politics, a new school of Russian thought. Two of these "circles" achieved eminence and are remembered. The first, to which Alexander Herzen and his friend Ogarev belonged, applied itself to politics and found its spiritual home among the early French socialists. The second, which came to be known as "the circle of Stankevich", eschewed politics and sought the truth, less dangerously though not less daringly, in the pages of German poets and philosophers.

Into this circle of young enthusiasts Michael now plunged. His philosophical studies assured him of a warm welcome. He lodged during the first month with Stankevich and later with Efremov; and among his new intimates was Vissarion Belinsky, destined to become the great literary critic of the generation. Michael was a ready learner and a still readier teacher; and an observer has described how he would "fall with a sort of brutality on every new-comer and at once initiate him into the mysteries of philosophy". Turgenev, who frequented the circle at a later date (though he did not meet Michael there), has left an attractive picture of its nightly gatherings:

Imagine five men and six boys, one tallow candle burning, wretched tea and stale, ultra-stale biscuits. But you should see our faces, you should listen to our words. Eyes are ablaze with enthusiasm, cheeks are burning, hearts beating, as we talk of God, and truth, and the future of mankind, and poetry. . . . And the night slips away silently and smoothly as on wings. Morning pales, and we part, moved, happy, pure-hearted, sober (there was no question of wine at our gatherings), our minds agreeably exhausted. And one went home through the empty streets at peace with the world, and looked up even at the stars with a friendly feeling, as if they had become nearer and more comprehensible.¹

Most Russian thinkers have taken more kindly to ethics than to metaphysics. By the time Michael had arrived in Moscow, the circle of Stankevich had abandoned Kant for the more popular moral homilies of Fichte. Fichte's *Guide to a Blessed Life*, an attempt to create an idealist system of ethics, became Michael's constant companion; and quotations and paraphrases from it fill most of his letters of this period. He translated into Russian Fichte's lectures *On the Vocation of the Scholar*. This translation, which appeared in the *Telescope*, the advanced journal of the day, was his first literary work and presumably brought a few roubles into his pocket. His other resources were nebulous. The "flight from Mecca to Medina", as he grandiloquently styled his hasty departure from Tver, had given him independence. But though it had made him, as he bravely declared, "a man", it had left him penniless. He ordered visiting cards inscribed "*Monsieur de Bacounine, Maître de Mathématiques*", and distributed them, by way of bravado, to his wealthy and aristocratic relatives. But it was not until April that he secured even one pupil. In the meanwhile he lived by borrowing from his friends, and when his friends could or would lend him no more, from professional money-lenders. Michael could cheerfully bear discomfort and privation. But when he was in funds he liked to dine, and to treat his friends, at the most expensive restaurants and to order the best wines. He cared nothing for money, and less than nothing for the obligation to repay what he had borrowed. He came to be rather disagreeably known, even in this free-and-easy Bohemian circle, as a man who lived at other people's expense. At first in jest, and afterwards more than half in earn-

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 196, 204; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiii. 11; Panaev, *Literaturniya Vospominaniya*, p. 239; Turgenev, *Rudin*.

est, his friends nicknamed him "Khlestakov", the braggart and sponger of Gogol's famous comedy *The Inspector*.¹

But when all else failed, he had one refuge. Madame Beyer still kept open house; and it was pleasant, regardless of the risks, to reveal the mysteries of Fichte to two such admiring listeners as Natalie and Alexandra. The innate didacticism of Michael's nature had been encouraged by Fichte's lectures *On the Vocation of the Scholar*.

I am strong [he wrote in naïve self-revelation], and I feel the need to serve as a prop to some beloved person. I need someone who will place himself with confidence under my guidance.

To act as mentor and father-confessor to emotional young women was irresistibly attractive to the twenty-one-year-old Michael. Before long he was recklessly confessing to his sisters that the society of the Beyers had become "indispensable" to him. Still more recklessly, he assured Natalie and Alexandra themselves that "his heart and his friendship" belonged to them. The situation of the previous year threatened to repeat itself in every detail.

This time, however, the affairs of the younger sister created a diversion. Madame Beyer was a masterful lady whose will had hitherto been law to her children. She was now endeavouring to force on Alexandra the attentions of an unwelcome suitor; and the girl, having hastily developed a religious vocation, announced her intention of entering a convent. Michael, as a specialist in family rebellion, took the situation in hand. He begged Alexandra to regard him as "one whose vocation was to deliver her and to open to her the gates of truth"; and he painted Russian monastic life, with a certain pardonable exaggeration, as "a sink of lying humbug, scandalmongering, and every imaginable kind of filth". He appealed to Varvara to come to the rescue by inviting Alexandra to stay with her in Tver. The invitation was issued and accepted. Michael was once more triumphant. Madame Beyer had hysterics and thought that Alexandra had deserved a thrashing. But neither the suitor nor the convent was ever heard of again.²

Michael's triumph was, however, followed by two other

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 209, 259; ii. 74; Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 78, 284-5, 290.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 204, 211, 213, 227, 232-4, 241, 291.

storms. These young romantics, who proudly believed themselves the captains of their souls, fell victims with an almost mechanical punctuality to the simplest and most obvious emotions. Alexandra, imitating Natalie's fatal example of the preceding spring, began to praise Michael to his sisters in terms so ecstatic that Varvara and Tatyana were once more roused to fierce jealousy, and complained bitterly to Michael that "the Beyers had evidently quite supplanted them in his heart". Meanwhile Natalie in Moscow was travestying her own last year's performance. So long as Alexandra was there, Michael had found safety in dividing his passions and enthusiasms impartially between the two sisters. But now the intoxicating influence of Michael's undivided attention produced its old devastating effect on Natalie's emotional nature. Michael's sermons about the superiority of the inner life of "friendship" over the external world of "passion" merely inflamed her hysteria, and she angrily retorted that there could be "no friendship between them". Michael, with incorrigible naïvety, was sincerely puzzled and distressed by the *débâcle* of his good intentions. He found himself, not perhaps without a grain of flattered vanity, "the unwilling cause of the sufferings of a girl whom I love, but whose torments I cannot assuage". Once, he reported half seriously to his sisters, he "got to the point of deciding to marry her". But he soon came to the conclusion that "this marriage could not make Natalie happy"; and the alternative remedy—to leave the girl alone—never entered his head. At the end of April, the Gordian knot was cut in the usual manner. Madame Beyer and her daughter left Moscow for the country.¹

The departure of Natalie, as he wrote to her a few days later, "deeply pained him and reduced him to complete solitude". Stankevich had gone to the Caucasus for his health, and the circle was breaking up for the summer. Michael had few other friends in Moscow. He was made a welcome guest in the house of Ekaterina Levashov, an aristocrat who indulged in the whim of patronising advanced thought. But Michael had little use now for associates whom he could not dominate or instruct; and though he found it convenient to dine there on Sundays, he missed no opportunity of "pouring out his spleen on this herd

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, p. 205; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 283, 289-90.

of soulless creatures, void of faith, love, or thought". There remained the pupil, one Ponamarev, whom he was preparing for his examinations in mathematics and physics. But Michael never took his duties as a private tutor seriously enough to detain him in Moscow when other attractions failed. In the first flush of revolt he had proudly demanded "individual liberty" and declared that he could "no longer live a family life". But now he knew better. Love and sympathy were as essential to him as oxygen; and where could he find them, now that his experiment with the Beyers had suffered shipwreck, save in the bosom of his adoring sisters? Despite everything, Premukhino was still his home. Its summer sights and sounds, familiar to him from the cradle, had a place in his heart from which he could never tear them. In the middle of May, a fortnight after the departure of the Beyers, he could bear Moscow no longer. Leaving his pupil in the lurch, he hurried away to Premukhino. The "flight from Mecca to Medina" had ended in the return of the prodigal son.¹

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The summer of 1836 was the crown of the first period of Michael's life. He had escaped once and for all from parental tutelage and from the nightmare of a regular career. Now that reunion had dispersed the shadow of jealousy which the Beyer girls had cast across the path, there was no restraint on Michael's impassioned didacticism or on his sisters' enraptured receptivity. Old Alexander Bakunin, though he had not altered his view of his eldest son's conduct, saw no reason to force the issue or to define an indeterminate position. There was a truce to the warfare of the generations. Between brother and sisters the halcyon days slipped away in a mood of mutual infatuation. Never had Michael had such wonderfully appreciative disciples. He left Premukhino once only during the summer—on a few days' visit to Tver; and this brief absence gave the girls an occasion to plumb the depths of the feeling he had inspired in them.

You have given us new life [wrote Lyubov], you have helped us to see the aim of our existence, and now you are not here to enjoy

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 211, 249, 299, 301.

the fruits of your labours, to share our happiness with us, to give us strength and courage.

And Varvara added a postscript:

Your little flock awaits you. Truly, Michael, I do not know how you have managed to make yourself so indispensable. May heaven bless you!

Tatyana on the same day begged him to hasten his translation of the *Guide to a Blessed Life*, since she desired to read it over "a thousand times".

Divine harmony [she continued three days later] suffuses my whole being. . . . My heart is so full of flaming love for this God whom you are teaching us to know, for you, for all my friends, for all creatures who are striving towards the same goal as ourselves. . . . You see, my dear, under what a debt we are to you, and how many claims you have on our friendship.

Michael's reply was in the same exalted vein:

At last I have found this divine harmony in my own family. . . . You are my sisters, not only by the natural laws of blood, but by the life of our kindred souls, by the identity of our eternal aims.

Years later, Tatyana could still write ecstatically that Michael was "always the cause of all our happiness, all our joys".¹

Michael's peculiar relationship to Tatyana reached its apex in the summer of 1836. Tatyana was not only nearest to him in age of the sisters (being just over a year his junior), but resembled him most nearly in looks and temperament. Judging from the extant photographs, she was the plainest member of a family not distinguished, on the female side, for good looks. The broad features and heavy lips, which gave an impressive strength to Michael's countenance, were ungraceful in a woman; and Tatyana, herself fiercely passionate, never seems to have awakened passion in any man but her brother. Between these two passion reached a white heat of intensity. They were kindred natures. But the flame which Michael brandished for thirty years across the European sky burned itself out in Tatyana unwanted and unused.

Michael was hotly jealous of any influence in the lives of any

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 222-5; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 325-6; Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, p. 12.

of his sisters which threatened to supplant his own. The mere approach of another man to his beloved Tatyana was enough to excite his rage. Soon after his flight from Tver to Moscow, the rumour that a fashionable young landowner, Count Sologub, was paying his addresses to Tatyana provoked a series of bitter mocking letters in which he ironically referred to Tatyana's "intoxication with the amusements of Tver" and to Sologub himself as "a society hero, a perfect gentleman". It was when these clouds of suspicion had rolled away that, as after a lover's quarrel, their passion reached its climax.

Thank you, my dear, my wonderful Tatyana, for your letter [wrote Michael in March]. It has brought me true delight. It has made me live through moments of pure happiness, and from the bottom of my heart I thank you, my bewitching dear. For a long time I had not tasted such marvellous delight. . . . Oh, I shall never doubt you again. Nothing henceforth can shake my faith in you.

A month later he had risen to still more lyrical heights:

No, my bewitching dear, nobody has seen your letter. But I have not burnt it. Ah, I shall keep it for ever, and never part with it for a single moment. Away with doubts! You have brought back to me my adored sister. Henceforth nothing shall separate us. If only you knew, if only you could feel but one half of the blessing which your letter has brought me! And you think that I could tear it up, or show it to anyone? No other eye has profaned it. It is pure from any cold, critical glance, it has been received into my burning heart which it has filled with joy.

Taken out of their proper context, the period and circumstances in which they were written, these wild and whirling words might lend themselves to misinterpretation. The idealisation of love between brother and sister was a commonplace of the romantic movement. It appears in many countries, and in such characteristic works as Châteaubriand's *René*, Schiller's *Bride of Messina*, and Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*. It was indigenous in the atmosphere of Premukhino. Alexis Bakunin, who was, so far as we know, a perfectly normal young man, wrote in one of his letters: "For me there is only one true, sacred love—the love of brother for sister". There can, nevertheless, be no doubt that Michael found in the jealous frenzy of his passion for Tatyana compensation for his immunity from normal sexual love. In later years, at any rate, he was himself conscious of its

abnormal incestuous quality. " 'The laws condemn the object of my love' ", he quoted in a letter written just after his departure from Russia; and, lest the reference should be obscure, he adds: "This refers to you, Tatyana".¹

The teaching of Fichte, which formed the staple of Michael's thought and of his correspondence and conversation with his sisters at this time, was the philosophical expression of the pure romantic spirit. It carried the idealism of Kant to the extreme point of subjectivism. "The soul must be its own object", Michael assured his sisters, fresh from the study of the *Guide to a Blessed Life*; "it must not have any other object." And he sketched for them the "fundamental idea" of Fichte's treatise in the following terms:

Life is love, and the whole form and essence of life consists of love and arises out of love. Tell me what you truly love, what you seek and strive after with all the longing of your soul when you are hoping to find true enjoyment of yourself,—and you have revealed to me your life. What you love, that is your life.

His mind dwelt continually on the distinction between the "inner" and the "external" life. The latter was a "sort of artificial life", based on "formulae of worldly wisdom and anti-Christian sermons about duty"—such, one may presume, as he had so often heard from his father. This was the world of "practical ethics at a cheap rate and penny-halfpenny morality". From this life of external obligations the disciple of Fichte could take refuge in the inner life of his own soul.

I am not made for external life or external happiness [Michael explains to Tatyana], and do not want it. . . . I live a purely inner life. I remain within my *I*, and am wholly buried in it, and only this *I* unites me with God.

It seemed but one step to divinity itself. "I suffer", he writes later, "because I am a man, and want to be God."²

But if Fichte provided the young romantic with a refuge from reality in the contemplation of his own divine soul, the poets and novelists offered him another escape in the dream-world of

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 193, 217-18, 271; iii. 2; Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, p. 77.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 209, 221, 274-5, 300.

fancy. It was in the circle of Stankevich that Michael first read those immensely popular, fantastic story-tellers, Jean Paul Richter and Hoffmann, both of whom justified the description applied by Balzac to the latter—"le poète de ce qui n'a pas l'air d'exister, et qui néanmoins a vie". In them Michael found a perfect artistic expression of the romantic belief in the primacy of the world of spirit over the world of phenomena, in the reality of the unreal. Under these influences, the lure of the miraculous began to colour all Michael's thoughts and ambitions. "Michael tells me", records Stankevich while they were together in Moscow, "that every time he returns home from anywhere, he expects to find something unusual." And Michael himself, in his *Confession* to the Tsar, refers to this "radical defect in my nature—a love for the fantastic, for unusual, unheard-of adventures which open up vast horizons and the end of which cannot be foreseen". This heady diet was supplemented by the reading of Goethe, Schiller, and, above all, Bettina von Arnim's spurious correspondence with Goethe, in which contemporaries saw the fine flower, and later generations the caricature, of the German romantic spirit. It must have been during this summer at Premukhino that Michael, as he recalled many years later, "translated Bettina at night in the garden, sitting above the grotto, by the light of a lantern".¹

The circle of Stankevich, the philosophy of Fichte, the fantastic German novelists, the nocturnal translation of the romantic outpourings of Bettina von Arnim, the passionate communion with his sisters—all these blended in Michael's heart with the influence of Premukhino itself. For the young Bakunins Premukhino was the very home and essence of the romantic spirit. Here in idyllic peace, undisturbed by the harsh realities of the "external" world, one could live the care-free enraptured "inner" life of the soul. Romantic idealism was in its nature an aristocratic doctrine. Its characteristic products were the fruits of idleness. It presupposed that the idealist should have the opportunity to cultivate his individual soul in untrammelled leisure and freedom; and these bounties the fertile soil of Premukhino richly supplied. Michael Bakunin never forswore the spiritual birthright of Premukhino. He remained an aristocrat to the end.

¹ *Perepiska Stankevicha*, p. 347; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 235; iii. 250.

It is, however, necessary to glance—though Michael himself did not do so till long after—at the reverse side of this specious medal. The high thinking of the young romantics at Premukhino was conditioned only by emotional self-indulgence and mutual admiration. It was, as Michael later confessed, “full of feeling and imagination, but void of all reality”. Of the lot of the serfs—the “reality” which made this inner life possible—it never occurred to him to think at all. There was no sense of duty to humanity, of responsibility to anything outside the individual self.

Abstract spirits like ours [Michael was to write later during the long hours of reflexion in prison] are so much absorbed in their own thoughts that, like chess-players who see only their game, we pay no attention to what passes in the real world, or to the thoughts, feelings, and impressions of those around us.

But it was Paul, the most intelligent of the younger boys, who, in a letter written ten years later to Varvara, most aptly sums up the characteristic vice of Premukhino:

An overheated imagination, inapposite theorising, excessive enthusiasm in childhood, are like so many sweetmeats and spices on an empty stomach. First of all, a man must feed on the coarse, dry bread of common life.

Michael, true child of the romantic age, continued throughout his life to shun the common bread of hard reality and to chew the sweetmeats and spices of his own fancy.¹

The summer of 1836 was the culmination of Michael's romantic period. Never was the escape from reality so complete. In association with his beloved sisters, Michael had made for himself at Premukhino an inner dream-world of the imagination. It was a world which he would continue to inhabit all his days; for Michael's career was a lifelong campaign against the world as it is. All his days he preferred his own romantic illusions to the reality of the external world. But never again was the illusion so persuasive or the imagination so triumphant. These summer days were the last period of perfect harmony in Michael's life. Already before the autumn, reality had intruded on Premukhino in the person of Vissarion Belinsky.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 27; iv. 220; Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, p. 360.

CHAPTER 4

AUTUMNAL REALITY

BEFORE Michael left Moscow in May 1836, he had begged his new friend Belinsky to visit Premukhino that summer. The invitation was repeated by letter; and in the latter part of August, after a prolonged period of embarrassment during which desire struggled with fear, the guest made his appearance.¹

The embarrassment was due to two causes. Vissarion Belinsky, who was three years older than Michael, was the son of an army doctor of limited means. The rigid caste system under which Russian society was organised denied to Belinsky the "hereditary nobility" which it accorded to the Bakunins and the Stankeviches. The fact that Belinsky was not, like most of Stankevich's associates, the son of a landowner, but sprang from the despised professional class, made little apparent difference in a circle where advanced opinions were held in honour. But it implied a wide divergence of background. Men like Bakunin and Stankevich met from the first as equals, and were united by a thousand invisible bonds of class tradition. But between Bakunin and Belinsky there was a gap of social incompatibility to be bridged; and Belinsky at Premukhino was treading on unfamiliar and alien ground.

In another respect Belinsky was also conscious of his deficiency. He had been expelled from the University of Moscow four years ago for writing a play which attacked the institution of serfdom. Since then he had eked out a livelihood by such literary work as he could pick up—contributing to the *Telescope*, writing a Russian grammar, and translating into Russian the novels of Paul de Kock. Posterity recognises in Belinsky the keenest Russian brain of his generation. But in formal education he lagged behind most of the other members of the Stankevich circle. His ignorance of German debarred him from direct access to the great philosophers whom his companions revered as the fount of all wisdom. He could worship them only at second

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 332-3; Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 284-5.

hand and through the indulgence of men better equipped than himself. Belinsky confessed to his shame that his bent was practical rather than metaphysical, and that he had not yet achieved that emancipation from reality which was the goal of the true romantic. He brought with him to Premukhino a keen sense of his own unworthiness, both social and intellectual, and an unmanly habit of blushing on the slightest provocation which was a constant torment to him.¹

Belinsky reached Premukhino at a moment when the heady vintage of Fichtean idealism had completely intoxicated the younger generation. He was as impetuous and impressionable as Michael himself; and he became so rapid a convert to the new doctrine that an article for the *Telescope*, written within three weeks of his arrival, contains a complete and enthusiastic *exposé* of the Fichtean system.

Every man must love mankind as the epitome of the full development of that consciousness which is his own proper aim, so that what every man loves in mankind is the future development of his own consciousness.

Thus self-development becomes a cosmic ideal; and the article ends with a remarkable apocalyptic vision of the future life:

In the distance, beyond the hills, appears the horizon of the evening sky, radiant and aglow with the beams of the setting sun, and the soul dreams that in the solemn stillness it is contemplating the mystery of eternity, that it sees a new earth and a new heaven.

The Premukhino landscape on a faultless evening of late summer had somehow become intertwined in Belinsky's consciousness with the philosophy of Fichte; and he was intoxicated, not only with Michael's metaphysical revelations, but with the gracious vision of the earthly paradise into the midst of which he had suddenly been cast.

You raised me from the dead [he wrote later to Michael], not by your new consoling ideas, but by bringing me to Premukhino. My soul was softened, its bitterness passed away, and it became accessible to healing impressions and healing truths. The harmony of Premukhino did not merely contribute to my resurrection; it was the chief cause of it.

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 115-16, 123.

Such was the powerful effect of Michael and of Premukhino on the most brilliant mind of his generation.¹

The halcyon days of Belinsky's visit lasted till the middle of September. Then several storms broke simultaneously. Michael had hitherto confined his philosophical speculations to the realm of personal conduct, and his taste for rebellion had been exercised solely in the domestic sphere. Belinsky, on the other hand, found in Fichte's uncompromising individualism a sound metaphysical basis for his belief in political liberty. One day, when the whole family was assembled at table, the conversation turned on the French Revolution—the *bête noire* of Alexander Bakunin. Belinsky, ignoring the caution imposed by the presence of the head of the family, not only defended the Terror, but recklessly let fall a phrase about "heads that still await the guillotine". Old Alexander was appropriately horrified. He was a perfect gentleman. He allowed himself to be restrained by the obligations of hospitality; and only when he accidentally came on Belinsky reading the *Telescope* article to Lyubov and Tatyana did he register a dignified protest against the attempt to infect his daughters with this revolutionary poison. But the anger which he could not vent on his guest was reserved for his eldest son. It was not for him to judge whether Belinsky had derived these scarifying ideas from Michael, or Michael from Belinsky. He was content to know that Michael and his friends in Moscow were not merely idling away their lives in futile philosophical speculation, but were openly preaching bloody revolution. It was all consistent with Michael's previous behaviour, which took on an even more sinister aspect in the light of these revelations.²

Having thus excited the suspicion and disapproval of his host, the unhappy Belinsky soon perceived that he had also incurred the enmity of Michael himself. He had, in all innocence, caused a serious disturbance in the precarious emotional equilibrium of the younger generation of the Bakunins. Lyubov, dreaming of Stankevich, and Varvara, wrestling with the problems of matrimony, were unaffected by the visit of this new literary lion. But for Tatyana and Alexandra it was an enormous event; and they

¹ Belinsky, *Sochineniya*, i. 171-88; Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 121.

² Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 273-4.

were soon almost as enthusiastic about him as about Michael himself. The effect on Belinsky was not less striking. He was no more insensitive than most authors to intelligent appreciation; and intelligent women, in particular, had rarely crossed his path. Before coming to Premukhino he had heard, "dimly and mysteriously", of Michael's wonderful sisters. His dreams were now fulfilled. He saw in the Bakunin girls "the realisation of all my conceptions of woman".

In these conditions, and given the continuous proximity imposed by country-house life, sentimental developments were to be expected; and they occurred. But they occurred in the uneasy and ill-adjusted form which such developments seemed so liable to take at Premukhino. Alexandra, now just twenty, was the only one of the sisters except Lyubov who had any pretensions to beauty. Belinsky, impressionable and starved of affection, fell hopelessly in love. Alexandra was ready enough to admire Belinsky's talents. But her heart was unstirred; and it was Tatyana's nimbler and more passionate nature which responded most eagerly to the charms of the shy stranger. Her sentiments as she heard Belinsky read his *Telescope* article were "inexpressible"; and before it was despatched to Moscow, she made a copy of it with her own hand.

It was, so far as can be judged from Tatyana's letters and from the sequel, an infatuation of the head rather than of the heart. But the mere suspicion was enough to lash Michael into a state of jealous fury—a fury all the more sour and demoralising in that he could not confess it to others, and did not perhaps care to avow its cause to himself. His friendship for Belinsky turned almost over-night to bitter, venomous hatred. There had always been a grain of condescension in Michael's attitude to Belinsky. He began now to treat him with open contempt. He broke into conversations between Belinsky and Tatyana with jeers and sarcasms. He snubbed him at table in the presence of the whole family. When Belinsky was to read a second article which he had written for the *Telescope*, Michael absented himself and drifted in towards the end of the reading with ostentatious indifference. He ingeniously tormented Belinsky in one of his sorest spots—his ignorance of languages—by talking to his sisters in German. Most wounding of all, he taunted his friend with his unrequited passion for Alexandra, and mocked the

presumption of a Belinsky who had thought himself a match for a Bakunin.¹

Under this rain of insults the sensitive Belinsky quivered with pain. He had not the self-assurance to face his persecutor, and took refuge in an ever profounder sense of his own shortcomings. He felt that he had made himself ridiculous by "aspiring to put on the imperial purple when the fit and proper garment for him was a sack of matting". Even the delight which he had taken in the friendship of Michael's sisters turned sour; for "the vision of angels only awakens in devils the consciousness of their own fall". Nor was Michael's own state of mind much more enviable. He had been stricken at his most vulnerable point. At the first blow of hard reality, his ideal world had crumbled; and there was no weapon in the Fichteian armoury strong enough to forge it anew.

I do not know [he wrote afterwards] what to call my feeling for Tatyana. I know only that it begot jealousy, and that that jealousy devoured my whole soul; it brought me to the verge of utter ruin. Oh! if you knew, if you could understand, all the terrible humiliations through which I passed, if you knew how I felt my own demoralisation, how I felt my own powerlessness! I who had been conscious of so high a mission, so lofty a vocation, stooped to a base, unworthy passion; and this passion conquered my whole being, so that I became its slave and had no strength to free myself from it. I became an object of pity to my sisters and even to you. Ah! it was hell—hell with all its torments.

This hell of torture and self-torture lasted for several weeks. It is a curious circumstance, significant for the student of human nature, that however ready these young romantics were to tear one another to pieces with their fierce undisciplined emotions, separation never occurred to them as a desirable or possible relief from the mutual infliction of pain. Human relationships, and the sentiments which they generated, were something too fundamental and too sacrosanct for the application of a mere external expedient like geographical separation. The problems which they presented must be faced and fought through, whatever pain might be involved in the process. The pain was, indeed, an essential part of the sufferer's spiritual development, and had a spiritual value of its own. The result was a kind of emotional

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 121, 157 159-62; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, p. 245.

fatalism. Michael, raging with jealousy, did nothing to hasten the departure of the unwanted guest; and Belinsky, simultaneously tormented by his unhappy love for Alexandra, by the incomprehensible insults of Michael, and by the silent disapproval of Alexander Bakunin, stayed on at Premukhino until the beginning of November.

Then, a catastrophe of different order broke the tension and drove Belinsky post-haste back to Moscow. The *Telescope* had of late been taking too many liberties with political and philosophical orthodoxy. It was prohibited by the censor; and one of Belinsky's few regular sources of income stopped. Old Alexander Bakunin had his moment of triumph. He took out the manuscript of *Osuga*, and added some fresh stanzas in which he denounced the new journalism, and celebrated the downfall of the *Telescope*.¹

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The days which preceded Belinsky's departure from Premukhino witnessed the climax of another serio-comic episode, which completed Michael's discomfiture and the ruin of the harmonious universe of his midsummer dream.

Of Michael's brothers, Nicholas had followed him, with less disquieting results, to the Artillery Cadet School in Petersburg, while Ilya was a cadet in a cavalry regiment. The three remaining boys—Paul, Alexander, and Alexis—were at school in Tver, where they lived in a flat with an old family servant under the supervision of Grandmama Poltoratsky. At the beginning of August 1836, when the summer holidays were over, Michael conducted the boys back to Tver and stayed there with them for a fortnight, returning to Premukhino only in time to receive Belinsky. Michael at this time could think and dream of nothing but Fichte, and he felt his usual need to impart his thoughts and his dreams to an appreciative audience. In the evenings when the boys came home from their uncongenial day's work, he would read with them and expound to them the wonderful revelations of German philosophy, which would show them the path of self-perfection and console them for the meaningless trivialities of the external world. The effect produced on their impressionable minds by Michael's exhortations

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 123; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 209-10, 269.

is recorded in a letter from the fifteen-year-old Alexander to his sisters:

The more we get to know Michael, the more we feel how indispensable he is to us. He has raised us high above our former state, and we have for the first time enjoyed a happiness unknown to us before. Mutual frankness unites us more and more, so that we are but one body, every member of which serves as a support to the whole. Now we truly understand the great vocation of man. Only you are lacking for our complete happiness.

But this lyrical mood ended abruptly with Michael's departure. The external world of school impinged inexorably on their consciousness; and a few weeks later the thirteen-year-old Alexis was writing that, if this life of boredom continued, he would cut his throat.

In this mood of mingled despair and truculence the three boys came on a mid-term visit to Premukhino in October; and during this visit Michael and Tatyana rashly promised to intercede with their father for permission for the boys to leave school and to go to Moscow, where they would continue their studies under Michael's supervision. The boys returned to Tver radiant with the hope that the hour of their deliverance was at hand. Michael in due course put the proposal to his father and received the answer which might have been expected. Alexander Bakunin declared that he would rather die than send his younger sons to Moscow and "expose them to the dangers which would threaten them in the society of Michael's friends"; and he deplored that, under Michael's guidance, they had already acquired "false opinions, a contemptuous attitude to the institution in which they were being educated, and an aversion from the methods employed in their instruction". There was no more to be said; and nobody was in any hurry to communicate this unwelcome intelligence to the boys in Tver.

Even Michael himself had no conception of the spirit of determination and rebellion which he had generated in the explosive adolescent minds of his younger brothers. One evening at the end of October, they sent for a carriage, loaded their baggage on to it, and bade the man drive them to Premukhino. Unfortunately the boys shared Michael's inability to attach any importance to money, and had made no financial provision for the journey. The coachman's suspicion was aroused by the

length of the journey or the youth of his fares. He demanded payment in advance and, when the boys indignantly refused, drove away grumbling. The altercation brought the housekeeper on the scene. The housekeeper reported to Grandmama Poltoratsky, who summoned the culprits to appear before her. The old lady seems to have been equal to the occasion. She called them "young puppies", threatened to instruct the police not to allow them to pass beyond the limits of the town, and finally read a letter she was writing to Michael in which she accused him of "setting a fine example to his brothers", and blamed him as the prime culprit in the escapade. Having finished her tirade, she slammed the door on them; and all parties retired to send to Premukhino their respective versions of these irregular proceedings.

These reports caused general consternation at Premukhino. Even Michael was shocked at his brothers' light-heartedness, and wrote to them in terms of common sense.

I spoke to you of moral freedom, of that freedom which consists in the eradication by spiritual effort of all bad habits and evil propensities; but you were thinking of another liberty, which your years, your studies, and your limited means place at present beyond your reach. . . . Treble your diligence, and prepare yourselves for every school lesson. Talk no more to all and sundry about the rights of man.

Tatyana told them that they had behaved "thoughtlessly, like children", and brought a "host of unpleasantnesses on Michael". The principal effect of the episode had been still further to discredit Michael and his teaching. Alexander Bakunin could see in the boys' act of defiance only a direct result of Michael's nefarious promptings and a clear proof that they were following, in Michael's fatal footsteps, the path of rebellion and ruin. He was too old to deal with the situation in person, and he trusted none of his children. In this predicament he begged his son-in-law Dyakov to proceed at once to Tver and restore discipline among his mutinous sons, resorting, if necessary for the purpose, to corporal punishment.

These stern instructions threw the whole of the younger generation at Premukhino into an uproar. They disliked the Draconian methods by which it was proposed to quell the revolt. They disliked the introduction of anyone who was not a Bakunin

into a delicate affair affecting the Bakunin family honour. They disliked, above all, the choice of Dyakov, whom Michael had always treated with unconcealed aversion and contempt. Word was sent to the boys of the threatened punitive expedition, and they prepared to resist to the last. One of them armed himself with a carving-knife to repel any assault on his person. Dyakov, however, though a man of unimpressive parts, displayed exemplary tact in the execution of his delicate mission. Prudently conscious of the weakness of his position, he employed neither penalties nor threats, but in the friendliest way carried off the boys to his estate to cool their hot heads and given them time to see their escapade in its proper perspective. The treatment was eminently successful, and the rebellion was liquidated in an atmosphere of apologies, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

Dear sisters [runs a letter from Paul which serves as a tailpiece to the story] we have just received your letters which clearly express your friendship for us. I was not overmuch in the mood to submit to circumstances because I had just read in Schiller: "All others *must*; man is a creative that *wills*. . . ." But I have come to see the necessity of submitting. There are cases in which man *must*! ¹

Only Michael did not share in the paternal pardon. The visit of Belinsky and the boys' escapade had convinced Alexander Bakunin of the irreclaimable wickedness of his eldest son. Hitherto, the old man had never altogether despaired of reclaiming even the most rebellious and difficult of his children. Henceforth, he was obliged to treat Michael as a lost sheep and as a hostile force. The cancer of revolt was in the family organism, and could not be eradicated. The only hope was to prevent it from spreading to the other members. On Michael himself the influence of these events was equally decisive and equally discouraging. The doctrine of Fichte had failed to stand the test. Despised reality had broken through its defences. The vaunted harmony had been shattered by Michael's own ungovernable passions, and rendered ridiculous by the childish exploit of his youngest disciples. At Premukhino he was now conscious only of humiliation and defeat. Within a few days he had packed his belongings and followed in Belinsky's wake to Moscow.

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 252-67; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 354-5.

CHAPTER 5

BROTHER AND SISTERS

It will be convenient at this point, before tracing the further course of Michael's spiritual development, to narrate two remarkable episodes in his relations with his two elder sisters, Lyubov and Varvara—episodes which illustrate the dominant position which his imperious nature had given him in the life of the family. The events here described stretch out beyond the period we have now reached. But the climax of both belongs to the year 1837; and they form a suitable appendix to the Fichtean epoch of Michael's career.

Lyubov was the least robust in health, and by far the gentlest in character, of the young Bakunins. Michael's affection for her was of an altogether paler cast than his passion for Tatyana or even for Varvara. It contained no element of possessiveness and provoked no jealousies. In the previous year he had smiled upon the nascent sympathy between Lyubov and Stankevich inspired by Natalie Beyer's tempestuous demonstrations; and when, in November 1836, just after Belinsky's visit to Premukhino, Lyubov came up to Moscow and once more encountered Stankevich, Michael was fully prepared to bless and encourage the mutual attraction. Stankevich let it be known that he could make no formal declaration of his feelings without consulting his father, who was expected in Moscow at the New Year. In the meanwhile the young people decided to correspond; and Michael undertook to forward the correspondence secretly in letters to his other sisters. Lyubov's agreement to this step was a sufficient confession of her love for Stankevich.

The love of so exceptional a being as Stankevich possessed, in Michael's eyes, a peculiarly sacrosanct and universal character. It became his favourite pastime to discuss and analyse, in the most public and unaffected manner, the transcendent qualities of Nicholas's love for Lyubov. He himself read, and read aloud to the Beyers and to other members of the circle, Stankevich's letters to his beloved which were entrusted to him for transmission; and he sent them on with his comments to Varvara and

Tatyana to be read by the latter before delivery to their rightful recipient. These curious proceedings bear witness to the eagerness of these young romantics to treat the individual as a function of the Absolute. None of those concerned seems to have found them indelicate or objectionable; and the letters were listened to with reverent admiration. Only Lyubov's sisters, immured with her at Premukhino and keyed to suspicion by their affection for her, found them curiously cold and abstract, and felt serious doubts whether Nicholas's devotion was of a kind to ensure the individual happiness of its object. Michael, in the calmer, more philosophical atmosphere of Moscow, angrily rebutted this unworthy scepticism. He penned an impassioned defence of Stankevich, which suggests not so much a lack of sympathy with Lyubov as a constitutional incapacity to understand the nature of his sisters' apprehensions.

You have no cause to accuse Stankevich. His love is true love, sacred, sublime love. It forms now his whole existence; it has warmed and illuminated with a clear radiance his whole moral and intellectual life. You should hear him when he speaks; it is something holy, superhuman, which speaks in him. . . . This love makes him perfectly happy. He has found in it the individual expression in the external world of his inner life. Love has completely transformed the individual life of this man into the life of the Absolute.

The letter containing this description of sublime, but alarmingly impersonal, love was written on the last day of 1836. In the meanwhile Stankevich's father arrived in Moscow. But nobody seemed in a hurry for a decision; and a month later he returned to the country declaring enigmatically that he must consult his brother on so important a matter. The correspondence between Stankevich and Lyubov continued its course. The suspense grew intolerable to everyone save Michael, whose patience and faith in his friend were both invincible; and it was not until April that Stankevich, having at last obtained his father's consent, made his formal request for Lyubov's hand. It was at once granted. The relief at Premukhino was immense. Michael was triumphant. For the first time for many years an event had occurred which united the whole Bakunin family in a chorus of enthusiastic approval. But fate was in an ironical mood. The removal of the last external obstacle was the sign for the real tragedy to begin—a tragedy, not of circumstances, but of character.

In the middle of March, a fortnight before the betrothal, Nicholas had written to Lyubov announcing that he was ill and that "the only salvation for him was Karlsbad". The illness was real enough. The recurrent fevers, the persistent cough, the pains in the neck and at the back of the head, were symptoms of the pulmonary tuberculosis which was to carry him to the grave three years later. But these attacks coincided with, and were in part perhaps induced by, a spiritual crisis which was taken more seriously by his friends than mere physical disorders. Stankevich was one of those romantic Hamlets whose weak resolution was chronically at the mercy of the "pale cast of thought", whose morbid consciousness of a mission paralysed every impulse to action. "He looks on every personal happiness as a derogation from his mission", wrote Belinsky of him at this time, "and every human tie as a fetter on his movement." The delays and hesitations of his father had echoed only too well the irresolution of his own heart. The implicit moral obligation incurred when he confessed his love to Lyubov had sapped his decision and preyed on his mind. The formal betrothal into which he had now entered completed the work of destruction, and convinced him irrevocably that his sentiment for his betrothed was not, after all, that sublime and passionate love which was the romantic prerequisite of marriage. He scarcely dared as yet to formulate this conclusion to himself. The journey to Karlsbad offered an opportunity of flying painlessly from an engagement which he could neither honourably break nor honourably fulfil; and he clung to it as the only way both to health of body and to peace of mind.¹

Michael, who approved every item of Stankevich's conduct, found nothing to criticise in this project. His one regret was that, owing to lack of funds, he could not accompany his friend abroad. He dropped a hint at Premukhino to this effect. Alexander Bakunin, whose belief in the innate wickedness of his eldest son was now instantaneous, drew the hasty conclusion that Stankevich's foreign journey was a scheme hatched between the two young men; and he wrote an angry and intemperate letter to Stankevich reproaching him, not with his desertion of Lyubov, but with inciting Michael "to career about

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, p. 293; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 378-80; *Perepiska Stankevicha*, pp. 370-78, 503-26; Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 110.

the world" at his expense. Only Varvara paused to ask why Stankevich should not marry Lyubov and take her with him to Karlsbad. But there was no answer to this natural question. In August 1837 Stankevich left for Germany alone, without having found time to visit his betrothed.¹

It is uncertain whether Michael knew even now that Stankevich would never marry Lyubov. But he spent the autumn of 1837 at Premukhino; and the special tenderness which he showed to his sister suggests that he had awakened to some dim consciousness of her tragic plight and, perhaps, of his own indirect responsibility.

Never before have we been so intimate [wrote Lyubov when he went away in November]. We have got to know and love each other still better. I am no longer afraid to talk to him; he has become so gentle, so unexacting. I confess that I used involuntarily to avoid him. Everything about him was so tempestuous, and it produced a terrible effect on me. Although even then I often agreed with him, I tried to avoid conversations with him. They made me feel sad. But now what a difference! I find such consolation in talking with him, and feel so sad now that he has gone.

The unreal correspondence between the betrothed pair continued at intervals throughout the winter. But the same disease which was driving Stankevich from one German watering-place to another in search of a cure had now attacked the unresisting Lyubov. In the severer Russian climate it made terrible strides, and by the spring of 1838 she was a dying woman. Michael came once more to Premukhino for the summer, and was there during the last months of her life. Years later he loved to recall how brothers and sisters had one day lighted a bonfire near his favourite tree, and how Lyubov had been brought out in a carriage to witness the scene—one of the last moments of unalloyed gaiety Premukhino was to know. In June, Lyubov wrote her last letter to her betrothed. In August, just a year after his departure from Russia and nearly two since their last meeting, she died.²

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The life and death of Lyubov Bakunin entitle her to be re-

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 306-9; *Perepiska Stankevicha*, p. 537.

² Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 317-18, 321-2; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 151, 250.

garded as a saint-like pattern of Christian humility and resignation. Varvara, too, was deeply religious. But her piety was of a different mould. In adolescence she had passed through successive crises of religious emotion, which once prompted her father to call her an "hysterical chit of a girl". Her faith assumed a passionate, mystical colour altogether foreign to Lyubov's untroubled acceptance of orthodox doctrine. Her conventional and loveless marriage to Dyakov at the age of twenty-two was therefore all the more astonishing. Dyakov, who was many years her senior, was amiable, undistinguished, and dull-witted; and Varvara's acceptance of his suit seems to have been a conscious act of self-immolation on the altar of family duty. The early history of the marriage may perhaps be divined from the marked aversion which Varvara afterwards displayed for physical relations with her husband. In November 1835 she bore him a son; and this gave her a plausible excuse for spending the whole of the following winter with her parents. She was still at Premukhino when Michael arrived on the scene in May 1836.¹

The hostility originally expressed by Michael to this "extravagant" marriage seems to have been no more than the normal dislike of a spirited young man for an uncongenial and unattractive brother-in-law. But now that Fichte had revealed to him the true meaning of life, Varvara's relations to Dyakov assumed a deeper, cosmic significance. They provided a classic example of the eternal conflict between the everyday conventional obligations of the external world and the profounder spiritual claims of the inner life of the soul. Michael now understood that Varvara's marriage was not merely, as he had once thought, an error of judgment, but a sin against her higher self, a betrayal of her sacred mission in life. From this sin she could be redeemed only through her sufferings and through her maternity. During that passionate summer of 1836 when Michael's moral ascendancy over his sisters reached its culminating point, Varvara herself was completely converted to this view of her case. There could be no question now of a return to her husband.

I have declined from my vocation [she wrote at this time]. I have allowed a man who is a stranger to me to profane me with his caresses.

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 67, 324; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 202.

But God, who saw my heart, spared me in my weakness. I have washed away my sin in my sufferings; and new life entered into my heart with the birth of my child.

In pursuance of his habit of using the private affairs of his sisters for the philosophical edification of his friends, Michael initiated Belinsky into every detail of the situation. Belinsky was easily persuaded of Varvara's "sin"; and shortly after his departure from Premukhino he received from her a letter in which she confessed herself "a weak, fallen creature", and thanked him for not having had of her a higher opinion than she deserved.¹

The story of Varvara Dyakov is, perhaps, the most perfect example of the eagerness of these young romantics to measure their passions and their conduct by the abstract standards of the philosophers. The collapse in the autumn of 1836 of the "Fichtean harmony" established by Michael at Premukhino, combined with Michael's own withdrawal, produced an immediate reaction on Varvara's attitude to her husband. External reality once more intruded. In the enthusiasm of the past summer it had seemed easy, under Michael's tutorship, to treat the whole business as a function of her own soul and an aspect of her duty to her higher self. But she now saw that Dyakov was a reality which could not be ignored. She was too honest to blame him for the fiasco of their marriage, and too human to be altogether indifferent to the father of her child. Her own sufferings might be the instrument of her redemption. But by what right did she inflict suffering on him? In January, two months after Michael's departure, she wrote Dyakov a letter full of pity and solicitude, begging his forgiveness for the wrong she had done him and expressing her readiness to "sacrifice everything but her religion". On the specific question of her return to him the letter was silent; and its ambiguity showed how uneasily her heart was tossing between discordant emotions. But it was enough to make Michael, when he heard of it in Moscow, furious. He was now deeply embedded in a philosophic Slough of Despond. But his jealousy of any rival in his sister's heart burned as brightly as ever. He took his pen and wrote to Varvara one of the fiercest letters in the collection of his correspondence.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 448; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, p. 345; Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 248.

He attributed to Dyakov "an animal outlook unworthy of a human being"; and after warning his sister that, if she returned to him, she would "shed burning tears of repentance when it was too late", he concluded with a passionate appeal:

Varvara, to renounce love is a crime; and you want to commit it. You want to separate yourself from all human life in order to live with an animal. . . .

Varvara, tell me what I must do in order to convince you of the truth of my words, tell me. My dear, there is nothing I would not do, nothing from which I would shrink. You do not know how much I love you, you do not know what I could do if you would only listen to me. Varvara, Varvara, in the name of heaven, do not destroy yourself.¹

But this time Michael had strained the bow too far. The letter had in it more than a touch of that insensitive ruthlessness in personal relationships which was characteristic of Michael's youth, and from which Belinsky had also had to suffer. Varvara was shocked and repelled by his uncompromising denial of any obligation to her husband and by his brutal description of Dyakov as "an animal". She decided that she had, on the contrary, a clear duty to the man she had married—a mission "to lead him to life and happiness, and to open his heart to the truth"; and by way of fulfilling this mission, she invited him to come and stay at Premukhino in the spring of 1837. There, however, the old incompatibility soon declared itself. Externally, Dyakov's behaviour was perfect. He yielded to her every wish, agreed to live with her "as brother and sister", and worshipped and courted her with humble devotion. But it was clear all the time that, instead of the "loving-kindness and care of a mother" which she offered him, his mind was still set on "earthly pleasures", and that this period of probation was, in his eyes, merely a prelude to his wife's return to his house and bed. After he had gone, Varvara wrote to Michael a pathetic and tormented confession of her failure. She had reached a position of such emotional complication that she could neither live with her husband nor dismiss him from her thought. Her one hope of escape lay in flight. When Michael came to Premukhino in the summer of 1837, plans were hatched for a journey abroad, the health of the child furnishing a pretext; and Michael himself, now immersed

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 331-5; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 396-8.

in Hegel and dreaming more and more eagerly of a visit to Berlin, would be her escort.

Varvara's "internal liberation" (for the antithesis between "internal" and "external" was still Michael's favourite *cliché*) was now complete. Her "external liberation" still presented a problem which was mainly one of finance. Calculation showed that the sale of Varvara's jewelry would not much more than cover the cost of the journey to Karlsbad of herself, her child, and a nurse. She could not live there on less than 2000 roubles a year. Michael himself, of course, had not a penny. But Alexander Bakunin, though he entirely disapproved of Varvara's attitude to her husband, might be induced to advance 1000 roubles a year out of her share in the family inheritance. The amiable, weak-willed Dyakov or his brother would perhaps help with the remainder. Perhaps Varvara could pay her way by giving music lessons or writing children's stories.¹

Negotiations were proceeding on this basis when Alexander Bakunin became aware for the first time of Michael's design to accompany his sister abroad. The discovery rekindled the old man's fury. He once more saw the hand of his eldest son in everything evil that befell the family. In December he wrote Michael, who was now back in Moscow, a long epistle (it was penned in his wife's hand—a sign of growing infirmity) in which he recited the long catalogue of his grievances. Michael had sown dissension between children and parents, and destroyed the children's faith in their father. He had perverted the minds of his sisters by "filling them with the wicked sophistries of Saint-Simonism, concealed under the guise of Christianity". He had induced his brothers to run away from school. He had killed Varvara's love for her husband whom she had freely chosen, and was inciting her to leave him. By way of conclusion, Alexander Bakunin adjured Michael either to become "a truly Christian son" or to terminate his "philosophical visits" to Premukhino. The situation at Premukhino became once more tense and bitter; and the girls believed, rightly or wrongly, that their father was encouraging Dyakov to veto Varvara's journey, or even to enforce her return to him by the threat of taking the child from her. Michael, perceiving that the power of the purse was likely to prove de-

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 340, 351, 353-5; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 133, 144.

cisive, resorted for once to conciliatory tactics. On the last day of the year he proceeded, not to Premukhino, but to Kozitsino, where his two maiden aunts still lived; and from there he sent to his parents a monster letter (the original has not survived, but an incomplete draft covers more than thirty printed pages) in which he reviewed his life and his relations with his father from earliest childhood. The letter was couched in affectionate terms and interlarded with plentiful quotations from Scripture; and it concluded with an appeal to his parents "to restore their love to their children, to help them to re-establish concord, and to save Varvara".¹

In the meanwhile, Michael was making desperate efforts to raise the necessary funds for his own journey abroad. His hope lay in Stankevich. Before his departure for Germany in the preceding August, Stankevich had promised to pay Michael's debts to the tune of 1000 roubles, to defray the cost of his journey to Karlsbad, and to allow him 1500 roubles a year while he remained there. The only trouble was that Stankevich had scruples about asking his generous father for such large sums. Once he had left Russia these scruples seem to have become more insistent; for in February 1838 he wrote to Michael from Berlin that he would only be able to let him have 2000 roubles in all "or perhaps still less", and gave him the unwelcome advice "to live more economically". A further letter in March was still more explicit and discouraging. There was no other benefactor in sight; and Michael had perforce to defer his ambitions.²

In the spring an improvement set in at Premukhino. Alexander Bakunin was mollified and gave his consent to Varvara's journey, though it is uncertain whether Michael's sentimental appeal, or his forced abandonment of his intention to accompany his sister, contributed more effectively to this result. Dyakov's brother generously provided the major part of the expenses. Dyakov saved his pride by making it a condition that he should escort his wife and son to Karlsbad and then return to Russia. But at the last moment, perceiving perhaps the absurdity of his position as a husband on sufferance, he bade them farewell in Petersburg, where they embarked in the middle of June for Lübeck. Michael remained behind, triumphant that Varvara's

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 86-7, 90, 96-130.

² *Perepiska Stankevicha*, pp. 631, 655, 659-60.

“liberation” was at last achieved, but bitterly disappointed that he had been unable to raise the necessary funds to accompany her.

It was just two years before Michael realised his ambition to follow his sister to the “promised land”. But at this point it is necessary to return to the beginning of the year 1837, when Michael was living in Moscow in the mood of depression and disillusionment consequent on the events of Belinsky’s visit to Premukhino.¹

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 138, 148, 186; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, p. 361.

CHAPTER 6

HEGEL AND BELINSKY

THE circle of Stankevich reflected, in the first months of 1837, the gloom which had overtaken its principal members. Stankevich was wrestling with an unsteady conscience over the affair of Lyubov. Belinsky smarted under the humiliations of his visit to Premukhino, the sense of his own unworthiness, and the necessity, now that the *Telescope* had ceased to exist, of living on his friends. Michael, though he had no more scruples now than at any other time about borrowing money from anyone who would lend, was tormented by the collapse of his philosophical self-assurance, and felt that he had no longer any firm basis for his thought and conduct. He perceived that his "external world" was nothing but "dreams and phrases", and that his "inner life" was "poor and shallow". Scepticism took its revenge for the "boundless faith" of the past summer. Even his feelings for his sisters had become "too petty, too trivial, too finite", and it seemed that his love for them belonged to the world of fantasy and illusion. But it was not in Michael's nature to remain a prey to pessimism. It was a philosophical disease, and it yielded to a philosophical remedy. The circle of Stankevich turned from Fichte to Hegel.¹

It was in the previous November that Stankevich had first approached the study of Hegel; and it is in February 1837 that the name of Hegel first appears in a letter from Michael to his sisters. Michael decided, almost at first glance, that the new doctrine contained the clue to his present discontents and, with all the readiness of his nimble, self-confident mind, began to preach the solution to his sisters and his friends. He learned from Hegel that there were three stages in the development of man—the period of instinct, the period of feeling, and the period of thought. The stage through which he had passed in the previous year, under the guidance of Fichte, was the period of feeling.

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 109; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 358, 386; ii. 18, 78.

But the harmony of feeling which he had then triumphantly established was transitory and illusory, since it was only a harmony of the inner soul and involved no contact with reality. It corresponded to the female period in man's education. But man must go out into the world. The inner harmony must be exposed to "storms of contradiction" and be destroyed in order that man might be driven, through suffering, to his resurrection through the instrumentality of thought. The "harmony of thought" brings about the reconciliation between the inner self and external reality. For the first and only time in his life he acquired a belief in the saving power of thought. "To think, to think, to think—that is the essential", he assured his sisters, though he was careful to explain that German "thought" was quite a different thing from French "reasoning" and infinitely superior to it—as far superior as the nineteenth century to the eighteenth.¹

Neither Michael nor his friends had done more than skim the surface of Hegelian lore when, in April, the circle dispersed. Stankevich went to spend the summer on his father's estate, preparatory to his journey abroad in the autumn. Belinsky, whose lungs were weak, went to the Caucasus. Michael himself returned in June to Premukhino. There, in the intervals of the struggle for Varvara's "liberation", he applied himself to the arduous study of Hegel; and his note-books of this and the following year contain detailed analyses of his reading. After summarising a text-book on Hegel's system of logic, he attacked the works of the master himself, beginning with the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. This evidently proved baffling, and was abandoned at an early stage for the *Encyclopaedia*. Here, in the introduction, Michael read for the first time the famous phrase which became the focus of so much controversy in Russia and elsewhere: "That which is rational is real, and that which is real is rational". But the analysis of the *Encyclopaedia* was interrupted before the section on Logic was finished; and Michael passed on to the lectures on the *Philosophy of Religion*, only to return three months later to the beginning of the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Phenomenology*.

These unsystematic proceedings are sufficient to show how difficult this eager disciple found the task which he had im-

¹ *Perepiska Stankevicha*, p. 624; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 408; ii. 185.

posed on himself. In fact Michael, though an omnivorous reader and possessed of a phenomenally quick and receptive brain, was not a natural student. He never achieved any thorough mastery of the Hegelian system. He took from it what he wanted and adapted it to his own spiritual needs. The romanticism of Fichte had failed him because it involved a negation of external reality; and reality had refused to be ignored. Hegel not only accepted but based his whole philosophy on reality, and triumphantly wedded the real to the ideal. In substance, nothing was lost. The romanticism of Hegel was more subtle, and not less profound, than the romanticism of Fichte.

There is no Evil [recorded Michael in his Hegelian note-books], everything is Good. Only limitation is evil, the limitation of the spiritual eye. All existence is life of the Spirit; everything is penetrated with Spirit; there is nothing beyond Spirit. Spirit is absolute knowledge, absolute freedom, absolute love, and, consequently, absolute happiness.

In the recognition of reality, Hegel had been careful to safeguard the romantic premiss of the divinity of man.¹

The Hegelian period of Michael's youth is indissolubly associated with the name of Belinsky. Belinsky, though he paid tribute to the romantic epoch in which he was born, was not, like Michael, a romantic by habit and temperament. He had seen and experienced too much of the struggle for life to nourish any aristocratic belief in the cultivation of the inner self as the supreme end of existence. He had been momentarily seduced by the "Fichtean harmony" of Premukhino; and he afterwards reproached Michael with having been the first to destroy in his mind "the value of experience and reality" by entangling him in "Fichtean abstraction". The transition from Fichte to Hegel brought Belinsky once more within sight of earth. Ignorance of German still confined him to second-hand knowledge of the sources of wisdom. But he seized eagerly on "reality" as the key-word of the Hegelian system; and while Michael, in pursuance of his native bent, found in Hegel a nobler and loftier romanticism, Belinsky—just as characteristically—discovered in him a bulwark of sober common sense against the romantic illusions of Fichte.²

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 389-93, 396.

² Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 227-8.

Between two such diverse natures conflict was inevitable. It was postponed longer than might have been expected. Belinsky had been too modest and too diffident to resent openly Michael's outrageous and inexplicable treatment of him during the last weeks of his stay at Premukhino. Their relations, when they met again in Moscow, were coloured by the mood of gloom and depression which had descended on both of them. But there was no quarrel; and at the end of June 1837 Belinsky, who was then at Pyatigorsk in the Caucasus, was inspired to write to Michael a long letter (its text has not survived) in which he attempted to diagnose the cause of their common "fall". Belinsky had at this time a less than superficial acquaintance with Hegel. But with or without Hegel's aid, he had discovered that the cause of the trouble lay in an excess of feeling and insufficient attention to the duty of being "an honest man". Michael was not favourably impressed. His aristocratic arrogance resented Belinsky's assumption that they were equals who could compare notes about the same spiritual experience. He was no longer interested in his "fall" of six months before. After some delay he wrote back to inform Belinsky, rather haughtily, of his "resurrection" through the study of Hegel. He had "risen never to fall again"; and he aired his superiority over those who were still struggling in the mire of doubt.¹

This letter provoked in Belinsky the first revolt against Michael's domination. He was stung by the discovery (which he might have made at Premukhino the previous autumn) that, in Michael's attitude towards him, "contempt had driven out love". In the whole tone of the letter, and even in Michael's illegible handwriting and careless spelling, he detected marks of a lack of respect. He replied at once with a lengthy indictment of Michael's whole position, which he elaborated in a further letter two months later. Michael was still, just as in the days of Fichte, living an "inner" life; and this "excess of inner life" blinded him to the "sordid" character of his "external" life. Michael's habit of "spending money which he had not got", and borrowing from his friends and his friends' fathers, seemed to Belinsky to be an example of this "sordidness". When he, Belinsky, borrowed money, he was conscious of bitter humiliation. Michael knew neither shame, nor scruple, nor desire to repay. Belinsky re-

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 77, 105-6, 125.

mind him of his treatment of a certain Count Stroganov. On his first arrival in Moscow at the beginning of 1836, Michael had accepted from Stroganov a commission to translate into Russian a German school text-book of history. For more than twelve months he did nothing. Then, reminded by Stroganov of his obligation, he cut the book up into sections and distributed them to his friends, his sisters, his young brothers, to anyone, in short, who had a passing acquaintance with German—an expedient which not unnaturally produced no result. Michael was up to his eyes in debt. He desperately wanted money for his journey abroad. He had undertaken the work. But the one course which never entered his head was to do it himself. Hegel notwithstanding, Michael still seemed to have an inadequate appreciation of reality. "Whatever you may say," wrote Belinsky, "there *is* an external reality, which requires you to submit to it if you want to be free from it."¹

These letters unexpectedly touched the gentler side of Michael's character. He rejected, it is true, the unworthy suggestion that "accuracy" in the matter of "halfpence" could be rated as a serious virtue by philosophers. But he had an uneasy conscience about Belinsky; and in November he wrote to him from Premukhino a long "confession". In a moment of expansiveness he avowed that his sins were three times as great as those of his friend. He explained for the first time the secret cause of his treatment of Belinsky in the previous autumn—his jealousy of Tatyana. Belinsky was deeply "moved and excited". It touched him that a man whom he had always idolised (even when admiration was mingled with hate) should thus humble himself before an inferior (for Belinsky's inward sense of his own unworthiness was still unshaken). It consoled him to have an intelligible explanation, and one which could command forgiveness, of Michael's hitherto unaccountable behaviour at Premukhino. Finally, it perhaps flattered him to know that he had been thought capable of making a sufficient impression on the Bakunin girls to excite the jealousy of their brother. The correspondence so unpromisingly begun proved an effective sedative. The problems of "reality" and of "accuracy" were left in suspense. When at the beginning of December, Michael arrived in Moscow, there was a sentimental reconciliation, be-

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 107, 117, 148-9, 153, 173.

tween the two men. The next four months were the period of their most intimate friendship—a prelude to the coming storm.¹

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The external events of these few months were few and unimportant. On arrival in Moscow, Michael established himself in the magnificent mansion of the Levashovs, where he was to act as tutor to the son of the house. But this arrangement, like every other arrangement designed to enable Michael to earn his living, was of short duration. According to his own account, he was homesick for Premukhino and could not bear separation from his Moscow friends. After exactly a week of tutorship, he found the life intolerable, and transferred to the lodgings of Belinsky, which remained his headquarters for the rest of the winter. In January 1838 he was at Kozitsino, working and intriguing for Varvara's "liberation". In February he paid a visit to the Beyers' country house; and here he became involved in another of those emotional complications born of his insensitiveness to the needs of normal, individual womanhood.²

The greater part of the visit passed agreeably enough in the reading of Bettina von Arnim, Luther, and Goethe's *Egmont*. Natalie's infatuation of three years before had quite burnt itself out. But now Alexandra fell a victim to this dangerous proximity. Franker and more courageous than her sister, she made, on the last day of the visit, an open confession of her love for Michael.

I stood before you silently as before God [she wrote to him afterwards]. He received my whole being. You perhaps could also read in my soul, but you were looking sadly at me and saying: I cannot receive you.

I read my sentence and went away—I did not want you to see my tears flow. But I could not remain far from you. I came and stood nearer, by the door, and I longed to press myself to you, to take your hand, to bend your head down towards me.

Michael was for some reason less embarrassed by Alexandra's directness than he had once been by Natalie's hysterical tantrums. He replied (as before, in a joint letter to both sisters) in a light-hearted vein:

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 157, 164, 177.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 80.

My jealous wife [*i.e.* Philosophy] sends you greetings, Alexandra, and bids me say that you are rather bold to forget that she alone has the right to my love.

But he saw no reason to curtail his passionate correspondence, and a year later was still writing to Alexandra that his "inner world" needed "an outlet, an echo", and had found it in her. This time his outpourings produced a bitter cry from the heart of a frankness which he seldom heard from his humble worshippers:

Will you not in very deed understand a woman as she is? Will not you see that, unless she is armed every moment against herself, against the natural inclination of her heart, she cannot continue in relations such as mine with you?

But this was a mere passing flash of protest. Michael was inexorable; and the correspondence went on without any perceptible change of tone until the moment of his departure from Russia.¹

Alexandra Beyer's sudden declaration of love seems to have stirred some fibre in Michael's heart, or brought home to him the anomaly of his condition. For immediately on his return to Moscow, he indulged in another of those tentative experiments which are scattered like milestones along the path of his youth. He met another remote cousin, Sophie Muraviev, and "something stirred within him—quite seriously". But he begged his sisters to say nothing about it to the Beyers, who "would be up in arms". A month later, he is not sure whether he is in love or not; for man is a "strange, elusive creature". Fate, he remarks half ironically, may one day "decide to match him with a *young lady*". But he is still far from "real love". And thereafter the fair Sophie fades, like the three fair daughters of another Muraviev, and the still fairer Maria Voyekov, into the limbo of oblivion. These were not things which could seriously occupy a Michael Bakunin.²

In the midst of such interruptions, the principal business of the winter was to initiate Belinsky into the secrets of Hegelian lore. Since his return from the Caucasus, Belinsky had been

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 141, 147, 232; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 593, 605.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 142, 161-2.

studying Hegel with Katkov, another member of the circle. But Michael's arrival drove out the thought of any other teacher. Michael's ascendancy was triumphantly re-established; and for several weeks the two friends were completely wrapped up in each other and in Hegel.

Never did I see in you so much love for me [wrote Belinsky afterwards], so much nobility in your character, so broad a sweep in your spirit, such poetry, so leonine a quality in your whole personality, both external and internal, as at that time. The memory of it will always remain alive in my heart, and in that guise you will always exist for me.

Michael's tribute, though tinged with condescension, was not less sincere. "My Vissarion has come to life again," he wrote to his sisters in February, "a wonderful man, a great soul."¹

The high-water mark of this unequal friendship was reached in March 1838. In that month a well-to-do printer of liberal inclinations purchased a derelict journal, the *Moscow Observer*, hitherto associated with conventional or reactionary opinions, and offered the editorship to Belinsky. Belinsky, deprived since the closing of the *Telescope* of any journalistic occupation or income, jumped at the idea; and Michael would, of course, become a regular collaborator. The cover of the journal was changed from autumnal yellow to the green of hope. The first number under the new management—it was dated March, though it did not appear till the middle of April—contained a translation by Michael of three of Hegel's lectures, preceded by a signed introductory article. The latter was Michael's first original work to appear in print.

The article was—as was inevitable at this stage of Michael's career—a paean in praise of Hegelian reality. In his note-books and letters to his sisters of the preceding year, Michael had been eager to stress the idealistic and romantic aspects of Hegelian doctrine. But now enthusiasm for the catchword of "rational reality", reinforced by the influence of Belinsky, led him into a new and surprising position. Authority had, he declared, been finally destroyed at the Reformation. Descartes had founded a new philosophy on the basis of the *ego*. In Germany, Kant and Fichte were the direct descendants of Descartes. The result of their systems was "the destruction of all objectivity, of all real-

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 293; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 142.

ity, and the concentration of the abstract, empty *ego* in self-loving, egotistical self-contemplation". In France, eighteenth-century philosophy, based on the divorce between the *ego* and reality, had ended in "materialism, the triumph of the unspiritual flesh". The French Revolution was the sequel of this "spiritual perversion"; for "where there is no religion, there can be no State". In his peroration Michael turns to Russia, where the same disease of unreality is also prevalent.

Yes, happiness lies not in fancy, not in abstract dreaming, but in living reality. To revolt against reality means to kill in oneself the living source of life. . . . Let us hope that the new generation will reconcile itself with our beautiful Russian reality, and that, abandoning all empty pretensions to genius, they will feel at last the legitimate need to become real Russians.

At this period Michael took no interest in politics. But this confused tirade, far from being revolutionary, evidently contained the germs of a doctrine of political conservatism of the most extreme kind. "That which is rational, is real, and that which is real, is rational." Hegel himself, having started as a rank idealist, had ended by preaching acceptance of the divine Church and the divine State. In March 1838 both Michael and Belinsky were visibly following in Hegel's footsteps; and it would be difficult to say (even contemporary witnesses differ) which was the leader and which the led. Belinsky, impetuous and uncompromising, followed this stony road to the end, and shocked his radical friends by vigorously defending the rational reality of the Russian State. Michael, the born rebel and romantic, was saved from so incongruous a fate. His devotion to orthodoxy proved to be a short-lived phase; and it is no more than an amusing coincidence that this phase should have produced his first original literary work. A violent quarrel with Belinsky, the origin of which had little to do with philosophy, led to a philosophical as well as a personal breach between them.¹

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The cause of the dispute is not far to seek. So long as Michael wore the prophet's mantle, and Belinsky was content with the humble posture of a disciple, their friendship was unassailable. But when Belinsky became an editor and Michael a mere con-

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 154, 163, 166-78.

tributor, the latter quickly found the position too galling to be borne. The pride of authorship provided insufficient compensation. His dream of writing more and more Hegelian articles for the *Moscow Observer* vanished. He informed Belinsky that he had come to the conclusion that, in the present unformed state of their opinions, they "had not the right" to publish a journal, and that the whole project must be abandoned. Michael seems to have supposed that his influence over Belinsky was still paramount, and that he had only to pronounce this verdict for it to be immediately accepted. But he had come too late.

A month earlier [wrote Belinsky to him afterwards] I should have been completely nonplussed. But a great spiritual development had taken place in my heart, and for the first time I had become aware of my own independence and my own reality (yes, my own, Michael).

He was conscious of the "fire and energy" within him, and had "found strength to lean upon himself". The days of his tutelage were over. He boldly informed Michael that he intended henceforth "to live his own life by his own wits and to develop in his own way". Michael greeted this declaration of independence with scorn and hatred. His reply was to organise what Belinsky called a "separatist coalition" among their common friends; and he wrote no more for the *Moscow Observer*.¹

It is time to introduce on the scene a minor figure in Michael Bakunin's biography, Vasili Botkin. Botkin was the son of a prosperous tea merchant. But plutocracy was unrecognised in early nineteenth-century Russia; and Botkin was the social inferior not only of a Bakunin or a Stankevich, but of Belinsky, the son of a professional man. Botkin was not sent to the university. But he carried away from school a passionate thirst for art, music, and literature; and a year of travel in Germany, France, and Italy completed his education. In 1836 he was introduced by Belinsky to the circle of Stankevich, where his versatile gifts, his prematurely bald head, his velvet jacket, his good-humoured laugh, and his incessant apologies for everything he said or did, won for him an affection not unmixed with kindly condescension. When, in the spring of 1838, Belinsky threw off the yoke of discipleship, the deferential Botkin seemed to Michael the most likely candidate for the succession. Botkin had the further

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 278, 294.

advantage of being almost the only member of the circle who was never short of cash; and Michael, on leaving Belinsky, established himself in Botkin's lodgings. For a short time, Botkin's docility ensured the success of the arrangement. But soon Michael grew restive. His host's amiable dilettantism was a poor substitute for Belinsky's quick incisive mind; and when Michael left Moscow for Premukhino in May to bid farewell to Varvara, his relations with Botkin as well as with Belinsky were strained to breaking point.¹

Michael's departure for Premukhino was followed in June by the arrival in Moscow of his mother and two younger sisters. There Belinsky saw them. His infatuation for Alexandra had scarcely abated; and the emotion which both girls excited could not, in his generous and impulsive heart, co-exist with ill-will towards their brother. Now that he had finally emancipated himself, he wrote to Michael, there was no cause for further hostility. He could love and respect and understand his friend as an independent being. But the terms of the letter show how powerfully the spell of Michael's personality still worked on him.

Yes, I love you now as you are, love you with all your faults, all your limitations, love you with your long hands with which you sweep the air so gracefully in moments of expansiveness, and on one of which (I cannot remember whether it is the right or the left) you so picturesquely and expressively fold the longest finger by way of proving and demonstrating to me that I have no power of abstract thought—"no, not even so much". I love you with your curly head, that store-house of wisdom, and the smoking pipe between your lips. Michael, love me too as I am. Desire that I may attain infinite perfection, help me to advance towards my high destiny, but do not punish me with proud contempt for falling short of it.

When it was time for the girls and their mother to return to Premukhino, they invited both Belinsky and Botkin to accompany them. But the visit, which passed under the shadow of Lyubov's impending death, led to no perceptible change in the relationship. Belinsky was uneasy and embarrassed, Michael quietly indifferent. "There was no peace," wrote Belinsky of this time, "only a patched-up armistice." At the beginning of August 1838, within a few days of the visitors' departure,

¹ Pypin, *Biografiya Belinskogo*, pp. 135-7; Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 127-8, 196, 271, 295-6.

Lyubov's death obliterated for a while every other memory.¹

But Belinsky, like Jacob wrestling with the angel, could not let his adversary go. Even now he had not made good his escape from the deep-rooted sense of his own inferiority. He must somehow wring from Michael a recognition of his right to be treated as an equal. The bitterest conflict was preferable to cool indifference. "Better no relations than false ones." In September Belinsky wrote to Michael three long letters which he himself refers to as "dissertations". One of them survives in an incomplete form, and occupies nearly thirty pages in the collection of his correspondence. It begins with a fervent defence of reality. "Independently, in the furnace of my soul, I have worked out the significance of the great word 'reality'. . . . 'Reality!' I repeat when I get up and when I go to bed, by day and by night." He shrank from none of the consequences of a strict application of the Hegelian doctrine. "Reality is a monster with iron talons and iron jaws. Him who does not gladly yield to it, it seizes by force and devours." He returns to Michael's own case. There are people who "understand reality admirably in theory, but live outside it". Michael's fault was, "idealism and lack of simplicity . . . the result of a deliberate rejection of living reality in favour of abstract thought". He touched a subject on which silence was rarely broken between Michael and his friends. "In fact you have not lived at all, you do not yet know what is well known to everyone even without going to school: the act of life, which is a mystery even apart from the feeling of love." Belinsky seems to have been the only one of his contemporaries acute enough to connect the peculiarly abstract and scholastic nature of Michael's attitude to his fellow-men with his lack of sexual experience.

In the later passages of his letter Belinsky ventured on still more delicate ground. In the tense emotional atmosphere which surrounded the Bakunin girls, Michael had not been the only victim of jealousy. Belinsky, on his side, was keenly envious of the unquestioned sway which Michael had established over them. In the heat of the controversy he delivered a frontal attack on this influence. Michael had perverted his sisters' sense of reality in the name of philosophy. He had ruined their lives by substituting theory for natural feeling.

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 190-92, 296-9.

You led them into the realm of thought, and gave them a new life. But I have strong reasons for thinking that they would very, very much like to escape. Before they learned the importance of abstract thought, they were saved from this desire by the simple feeling of submission to providence. The latter pleases me better.

He mocked the girls' supposed philosophical accomplishments. "The corner-stones of their knowledge are the two magic words: 'Michael says'." Belinsky caustically hopes that one day "this doctor's robe of thought, which so ill becomes them, will fall from their shoulders, and they will return once more to their pristine, sacred, delightful simplicity".¹

Michael, intolerant of criticism, would have found it hard enough to bear Belinsky's massed attack on his philosophy and on his person. But the climax of the letter lashed him into a fury. It wounded him in two of his most sensitive spots—his passionate admiration for his sisters and his vanity as a teacher. This time there could be no mercy. Michael's long and angry retort has not survived. But he assured his brothers that he had given Belinsky "such a drubbing on his back and other parts that he will continue for a long time to rub his trousers". Quotations from the letter appear in Belinsky's counter-reply; and it is clear from these that Michael rebutted not only the attacks on his sisters and himself, but the whole turn which Belinsky had given to "rational reality". Michael remained a good Hegelian. But in his interpretation of Hegel he firmly rejected Belinsky's "monster with iron talons and iron jaws", and once more gave hostages to "idealism" and "free and independent thought". Belinsky's counter-reply took a fortnight to write and covers nearly fifty pages of print; and it effectually brought to an end the chequered friendship between this vehement and ill-assorted pair. A year later, when scars had formed over their wounds, they met again. But the mutual attraction, and with it the strange influence which they had exerted over each other, was a thing of the past. Belinsky had emancipated himself for ever from Michael's tutelage. And in doing so he emancipated Michael from the narrow orthodox conception of Hegelian reality in which he had so nearly become embedded. Four years later, under other influences than those of Belinsky, Michael

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 227-55, 259, 299-300.

interpreted Hegel in an altogether different sense.¹

Belinsky was the most intelligent, and perhaps the most warm-hearted, of all the friends of Michael's early manhood; and his letters contain the most penetrating comments which have come down to us both on the strength and on the weakness of Michael's character. Belinsky was deeply conscious of both. "To live in the same room with you," he wrote at the height of the conflict, "means to quarrel with you." And later: "He is the one man to be with whom means for me to take a great step forward in thinking—a devilish capacity for communicating ideas!" The contradiction was never resolved; and Belinsky continued to hover between "love which is near to hatred, and hatred which is near to love". The complex picture may be completed by two further excerpts from his correspondence. The first comes from the counter-reply of October 1838, and is addressed to Michael himself:

Strength, undisciplined power, unquiet, excitable, deep-seated spiritual unrest, incessant striving for some distant goal, dissatisfaction with the present . . . an impulse for generalisation without regard for personal considerations—that is your character. Add to this a lack of natural heartiness, of amiability, of tenderness—if I may so express it—in your dealings with your neighbours. For this reason it has been so easy for you to say time and again: "Well, if we must part, we part", or "If you don't like it, you can lump it", and so forth. By these means you crushed everyone with your weight, and made it difficult for any ordinary person to love you.

The second passage occurs in a letter to Stankevich:

A marvellous man, a deep, primitive, leonine nature—this cannot be denied him. But his demands, his childishness, his braggadocio, his unscrupulousness, his disingenuousness—all this makes friendship with him impossible. He loves ideas, not men. He wants to dominate with his personality, not to love.²

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 204, 212-13; Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 259-307.

² Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 204, 287, 307; ii. 6.

CHAPTER 7

ESCAPE

THE interval of twenty months between Michael's quarrel with Belinsky and his departure for Berlin contains no important landmark in his spiritual development. Despondency was his predominant mood. With Lyubov dead and Varvara abroad, Premukhino had lost half its appeal. He had exhausted the possibilities of philosophical philandering with the Beyer sisters. The circle of Stankevich was in dissolution. In Belinsky he had lost the only member of the circle (since the departure of Stankevich himself) whose companionship had power to stimulate and inspire him. He shed—it was the most striking symptom of all—his passion for teaching, and even his confidence in his power to teach.

I am no longer any good at preaching to others [he confessed to his sisters]. I myself need to be instructed. While I was instructing others, a host of insidious enemies crept into my soul, which I must now expel.¹

In this subdued frame of mind, Michael forced himself to become a student. Now that Botkin was his one remaining friend, there was nothing to draw him to Moscow; and for the first time since childhood Michael spent the greater part of the winter at Premukhino. He afterwards alleged another motive for his stay. The whole household at Premukhino had been sorely smitten by the death of Lyubov. Michael perceived how much his parents needed “a helper in the affairs of the family”; and he decided to “sacrifice himself to the peace of mind of his parents and the welfare of his sisters and brother”. During this winter a small paper factory, operated of course by serf labour, was set up at Premukhino. Michael prudently calculated that the increased revenues derived from the factory would enable his father to finance his journey to Berlin; and he determined to cultivate friendly relations. His attitude to his father was, in

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 294-5.

his own words, "affectionate, respectful, and at the same time firm". He would sacrifice everything except (the underlining is his own) his "*boundless thirst for knowledge—a thirst which constitutes the radical basis and inner substance of my whole spiritual life*".

Michael's note-books of the period preserve a fairly full record of the sources from which he slaked this overwhelming thirst. His appetite whetted by the long duel with Belinsky, he continued his extensive, if unsystematic, studies of Hegel. But his mind began to sweep further afield. For more than two months he wrestled with Greek grammar, presumably in order to fit himself to read the ancient philosophers. He made summaries of several works on religion, including Neander's once-famous *History of the Christian Church*, of text-books of ancient history, and of Guizot's *History of French Civilisation*. Among other books on a reading list compiled by him in May 1839 were the *Laws of Manu*, the Koran, the works of Locke, an English grammar, and a treatise on the Differential Calculus. Whether he actually read any or all of these works remains uncertain; and the same doubt applies to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* which is also mentioned in his correspondence. But when every deduction is made, there is sufficient evidence of copious and varied reading to betoken a high order of concentrated intellectual effort. There can be no great exaggeration in Michael's own account of himself as "sitting from morning to night over studies which are sometimes very laborious, since my military education and my former laziness have left vast gaps in my knowledge".¹

His mixed reading is reflected during this period in a strong element of eclecticism in his philosophy. He returned to Schiller, whom, in the days of their extreme Hegelianism, Belinsky and he had rejected as abstract and sentimental. He read a *Life of Fichte*, hailed his old master once more as a "true hero of our age", and praised his capacity for "withdrawing himself from every incidental and external circumstance and from the opinion of the world in order to move steadily and unwearyingly to his appointed goal". But Michael's most important new discovery was Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, which, by substituting an historical for a supernatural Christ, started a revolution in German thought.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 7-12, 229, 246, 260, 276, 396, 399, 402.

Michael now learned for the first time that the Hegelians in Germany "had split into two parties"—a Left wing which supported Strauss, and a Right wing which "strongly and solemnly" opposed him. Michael, of course, still belonged to the latter camp. Botkin in Moscow was a subscriber to the *Hallische Jahrbücher*, the recognised organ of the "Hegelian Left"; and it was from Botkin, who sent him an issue of the *Jahrbücher* to read, that Michael first heard the name of Ludwig Feuerbach, a professed Hegelian who was leading the attack on revealed religion and seeking a materialistic basis for religion and philosophy. These ideas seemed to Michael so paradoxical that they were still scarcely within the range of his comprehension. He clung firmly to the right wing of the Hegelian army, and warned his sisters, while admiring Strauss, "not altogether to believe in him". But it is a moment worth recording in his career when he first became aware that disciples of Hegel could appear as champions of revolutionary opinions.¹

Except for two short visits to Moscow with Tatyana in December and March, during both of which he consorted with Botkin and avoided Belinsky, Michael remained at Premukhino without interruption, buried in his studies, until July 1839. Then the need of some external stimulus became too insistent, and he set out for Petersburg, where he had not been since the ignominious end of his career at the Artillery Cadet School more than five years before. The cause, or pretext, of his journey was a curious one. He proposed to make arrangements for Varvara's divorce from Dyakov; and he wrote to assure Varvara, on the eve of his departure, that he would "do everything possible to set her free". The scheme was in itself fantastic. Divorce under Russian law was never an easy matter without political influence; and Michael could wield no such influence in opposition to his father. Alexander Bakunin, whom Michael had characteristically omitted to inform of his project, learned of it after his departure, and made it the theme of another biting epistle to his eldest son:

I will confess that it hurt me very much that you, on leaving for Petersburg, said nothing to me of your plans and proposals. I might perhaps have given you some useful advice. . . . Your efforts and

¹ Granovsky, *Perepiska*, ii. 377-8; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 232, 275, 306; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 524-5.

petitions can have no result. I thought of writing to Varvara to that effect; but I know by experience that my advice will be completely useless.¹

But the visit to Petersburg, though fruitless as regards the professed purpose, proved sufficiently attractive to induce Michael to prolong it for four full months. On the day of his arrival, he encountered Sergei Muraviev, a distant cousin of his own age, whom he had known during his previous period of residence in Petersburg, and went to lodge with him. He saw something of his brother Nicholas, who had succeeded him at the Artillery Cadet School, and whom he had scarcely met since childhood—the one member of the family who was a complete stranger to him. He called on his numerous relatives in Petersburg, including Nicholas Muraviev, whose hospitality he had so often enjoyed during his last months at the School. The old man received him as warmly as ever; but Michael, having discovered that the three fair daughters were no longer at home, did not go again. He approached Dubbelt, the head of the Third Division of the Imperial Chancery, whose wide purview extended to questions of divorce. He made the acquaintance of Kraevsky, the enterprising editor of the popular monthly *Notes of the Fatherland*. Kraevsky, on whom the first encounter with Michael produced its usual overwhelming impression, promptly engaged him to write articles on philosophy for his journal. Michael once more had visions of a lucrative source of income, and promptly set to work on the first of these articles, which was published in the spring of 1840. Then the impulse petered out. The second article was not completed till the eve of Michael's departure from Russia and never appeared.²

But before the end of Michael's stay in Petersburg, unpleasantnesses began to accumulate. He was so despondent at the failure of his efforts on Varvara's behalf that for nearly two months he wrote to nobody at Premukhino. His father, in the letter already quoted, bitterly mocked his literary prospects. It was all right for Belinsky, he sarcastically remarked, to sell his intellectual capacities. But Michael would be well advised to devote himself to agriculture and the affairs of the household,

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 225, 231, 255-6; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 568-9.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 257-8, 371-85; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, p. 570.

reserving intellectual pursuits for his leisure hours. The relationship of host and guest placed too great a strain on Sergei Muraviev's affection for his cousin. He was heard to complain that he was at his wits' end how to get his visitor out of the house; and Michael was at length constrained to move, first to a fashionable hotel (though he had not a penny in his pocket), and then to the house of a former comrade at the Artillery School. In October 1839, while Michael was in this gloomy frame of mind, Belinsky arrived in Petersburg, accompanied by Panaev, a well-to-do dilettante who aspired to the rôle of a Maecenas to rising men of letters. It was just a year since the famous quarrel. When the two men met, it struck Belinsky that Michael had "grown wiser and more human". After a certain period of embarrassment he fell once more under the old spell, and found in Michael the "friend and brother of his soul". The reconciliation was more whole-hearted on Belinsky's side than on that of Michael. It was not destined to be durable. But it survived the remaining days of Michael's stay in Petersburg. In the middle of November, an urgent summons arrived from Botkin. Botkin sent him 4000 roubles through Panaev to pay his debts; and he left Petersburg for Premukhino and Moscow.¹

A brief digression will explain this sudden appeal. Botkin had fallen a victim to the invariable rule by which Michael's friends became sentimentally entangled with Michael's sisters. In July, while Michael was in Petersburg, the other members of the Bakunin family had paid a visit to Moscow; and here Botkin fell in love with the good-looking Alexandra, whom he had first seen at Premukhino in the previous summer. What is less clear (for her letters are not preserved) is how far she was in love with him. Botkin was socially ineligible, and had no obvious personal attraction. But Alexandra, who was twenty-three, may well have felt that it was time she had a wooer. She temporised; and before returning with her parents to Premukhino she agreed, as Lyubov had done with Stankevich, to carry on a secret correspondence with her suitor. Michael was initiated into the affair. Years had mellowed him; and Alexandra never stirred within him those dark emotions which were so easily excited where Tatyana was concerned. He wrote Alexandra a remark-

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 540, 567, 570; Belinsky, *Pisma*, ii. 1-2, 10, 48.

ably sensible letter in which he advised her to marry Botkin if she was sure that she really loved him.¹

These proceedings, though concealed from old Alexander Bakunin, were sedulously discussed, in accordance with the practice of these romantic young people, by Alexandra, by Botkin, by Michael, and by all their friends in Moscow and Petersburg. In this way they came in October to the knowledge of one of Alexandra's maternal uncles, who thought it his duty to inform his brother-in-law. Alexander Bakunin was not unnaturally scandalised. He wrote Botkin an ironically polite and quaintly circumlocutory letter in which he referred to Alexandra as "my kinswoman" and to himself as "my kinswoman's father", and declared that he could never recognise such a marriage. Botkin, irresolute and characterless, had long expected this consummation and was at his wits' end. He could think of nothing better than to send urgently for Michael, who, in the middle of November, set out for Premukhino, breathing fire and slaughter against "this beast of an uncle".²

No record having survived of what passed on his arrival at Premukhino, Michael's last open battle with his father must remain unchronicled. But it is clear that the eldest son was once more the principal scapegoat of the indiscretions of his sister; and there is extant a letter to Alexandra from her mother in which Michael is bitterly criticised for not having betrayed his sister's secret. He stayed only a few days, and departed for Moscow, characteristically declaring that "he had no father", and that Premukhino had been "spoiled and degraded by the absence of all humanity, religion, or love". The lovers continued their ineffectual correspondence. But both Botkin's infirm resolution and Alexandra's uncertain affection had received a severe blow. Early in 1840 there was a deterioration in Michael's relations with Botkin, who accused him (perhaps with reason) of warning Alexandra that her marriage with Botkin would estrange her from her brothers. The correspondence dragged on for a few months longer. Then there was a breakdown in Alexandra's health. The letters ceased, and this feeble and furtive romance came to an end. Pale, unsubstantial figures like Dyakov and Botkin ventured at the peril of their peace of mind

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 525-6; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 258-9.

² Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 541-2; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 268.

into the tense, overcharged atmosphere which was the native air of the young Bakunins.¹

The winter of 1839-40 in Moscow—the last which he was to spend in Russia—brought Michael into touch with two striking personalities who were destined to play an important rôle in his later career. It has already been mentioned that, in the early 'thirties, when Stankevich formed his philosophical circle, there existed in Moscow a rival circle of a political character under the leadership of Herzen and his friend Ogarev. In 1834, scenting an inclination on the part of this circle to transfer its radicalism from the sphere of theory to that of practice, the police arrested its principal members and banished them from Moscow, Herzen being sent to Perm in the Urals and the less dangerous Ogarev to his native province of Penza. But by 1839 the wrath of the authorities was appeased. When Michael reached Moscow in November, Ogarev and his wife had received permission to settle there; and Herzen paid several visits to the city during the winter. Michael's quarrel with Belinsky had finally destroyed the circle of Stankevich. Botkin, Katkov, and some of its lesser lights were still in Moscow; and Granovsky, an early member and a close personal friend of Stankevich, had recently returned with the acquired kudos of three years' residence in Berlin. But there was no centre and no leadership. Michael was a disruptive, not a uniting, force. He preferred new friends to old; and in Herzen and Ogarev he found new and congenial companions.

Herzen has left, in the memoirs which he wrote some twenty years later, a characteristically vivid and lucid picture of the arguments which raged at this time round the Hegelian doctrine of the rationality of the real. His account is historically incorrect, for he telescopes discussions with Michael, which took place in Moscow, and discussions with Belinsky, which must have occurred in Petersburg. But he is right about the essence of the matter. Belinsky had now reached the extreme conservative and fatalist position, and was prepared to admit, in response to Herzen's challenge, that "the monstrous autocracy under which we live is rational and is bound to exist". Michael, on the

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 551, 553-4; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 270-71, 308.

other hand, who had at first seemed to share this view, began to have his doubts. "His revolutionary instinct was driving him in the other direction." In fact, Michael had begun to have his doubts for a long time before he met Herzen. He was driven in the "other direction", not by any "revolutionary instinct" (of which, in the political sense, he still had none), but by Belinsky's attempt to apply the doctrine of rational reality to questions of everyday life and conduct (such as "accuracy" in the matter of "halfpence"), and by Belinsky's presumptuous criticism of the philosophical education of his sisters. For Michael, the problem of reality was still primarily metaphysical and ethical. His article on philosophy in Kraevsky's *Notes of the Fatherland* contains no hint of any inclination to turn Hegel to political uses. In politics Michael retained, right up to the moment of his departure from Russia, an orthodoxy born of indifference; and there is no shade of irony in the prediction in one of his letters that Paul will one day be a "model landowner", or in his praise of Nicholas as "entirely devoted to his Tsar and his country—a true Russian".¹

There is in fact nothing in Michael's letters or writings at this time to suggest that the politically minded Herzen exercised any influence over him. From the moment of his quarrel with Belinsky to that of his departure abroad his ideas underwent no noteworthy change; and the winter in Moscow was, from the point of view of his intellectual development, completely barren. He snatched time enough from the study of Hegel to become a passionate chess-player. He indulged more freely than was his wont in social amusements, attending frequent receptions at the Ogarevs' (Maria Ogarev had social pretensions and liked to keep open house, especially for intelligent men) and musical evenings at Botkin's. On New Year's Eve there was a supper at Botkin's consisting of mayonnaise, sturgeon, and woodcock, at which Michael drank nine glasses of champagne. The supper was followed by "gymnastic experiments", at which he particularly distinguished himself; and on another occasion it was recorded that he danced "very gracefully". It is unfortunately not established whether he was one of the party which, a few weeks later, accompanied Botkin to a charity fancy-dress ball, where the guests at supper proposed in turn toasts to all the

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiii. 15-16; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 234, 295.

Hegelian categories from "Pure Existence" to "Idea".¹

Nor did Michael escape the scandals inseparable from this empty round. Maria Ogarev had a gentle, long-suffering husband and was fond of flirtation; and among the most assiduous of her swains during the winter of 1839-40 was Katkov. Exactly what happened is veiled in decent obscurity. But according to the favourite version Michael, calling one day on Maria Ogarev, found Katkov with her in a compromising position, and hastened to relate what he had seen to all their friends. Katkov wrote an abject letter of apology to Ogarev. The apology was accepted; and both husband and lover turned to rend the scandalmonger. The mild Ogarev, fierce in defence of his wife's honour, broke off all relations with "this long reptile". Katkov nursed a long and bitter resentment, and took his revenge, in a manner which will be related, in the following year. In the meanwhile Moscow gossip was busy with Michael's own reputation. He had opened letters addressed to other people. He had lived for six years at the expense of his friends. He had begged 3000 roubles from Stankevich, after Stankevich had jilted Lyubov. He had lived on Botkin for a whole year, had in return supported Botkin's wooing of Alexandra, and had finally betrayed him. This farrago of fact and fancy circulated at Michael's expense for several months. He was a lonely man, ever more and more at variance with the world and with himself. Both Moscow and Petersburg now had unpleasant memories for him; and there was scarcely a friend left on whom he could count.²

Pessimism settled down like a cloud on his soul. He had lost the sense of his mission, the confidence in himself, the certainty of a great future. His pride was humbled. Stankevich, that now distant object of his veneration, the man with whom nobody ever quarrelled, the man who had the singular gift of evoking the best in all his friends, was the only confessor to whom he could unburden himself.

My whole life, my whole virtue [he wrote to Stankevich in February 1840] have consisted in a sort of abstract spiritual force, and that force has been shipwrecked on the sordid trivialities of everyday family life, of empty family quarrels, and of quarrels between

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 555-7; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, 280-81.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, pp. 482, 485-6; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. xiii-xiv.

friends, and perhaps also on my own incapacity. There still survives within me the old strong need, predominating over everything else, for living knowledge—a thirst which is still unsatisfied despite all my poor, laborious efforts. All my knowledge is limited to the fact that I know nothing—a necessary transitional state as a prelude to true knowledge, but a very poor and unrewarding one for anyone who is condemned to remain in it.

The unaffected modesty and patent sincerity of these lines give them an outstanding place in Michael's correspondence.

From this spiritual malaise the only escape lay in foreign travel. The German romantics had found it in Italy. The Russians sought it in Germany. For five years now, amid every fluctuation of opinion, Michael had never wavered in the conviction that the key to knowledge was contained in German philosophy. If his thirst for wisdom was still unslaked, it was because he had been unable to drink at the authentic fount. The journey to Berlin became "the only purpose of my life . . . the sole meaning of my life". It would be his "baptism by water and the spirit".

Oh! you cannot imagine [he wrote to his sisters at this time] how great is my impatience! I cannot remain here a minute longer. I can and must *know*; for in holy, divine knowledge lies all my life, all my happiness, all my strength.

He had reached a major crisis in his career. The whole "fate of his spiritual existence" was at stake.¹

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In this mood Michael steeled himself for a final effort and, "with a feeling of peculiar, restless excitement which he had rarely known before", wrote a long appeal to his parents. The letter, which has survived, displays literary talent of a far higher order than his journalistic experiments of the period. A cunningly woven tissue of humility and independence, of sincerity and ingenuity, it foreshadows in miniature the great *Confession* to the Tsar of eleven years later. Michael admitted the "mistakes" and "failures" of his past. But he did not regret them; for they had been "a fine school of experience". He had completely emerged from "that mood of exaltation which made me

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 256, 260, 296, 304, 407.

think that man can with impunity detach himself from all social conditions"; and his one ambition was now to find "some definite and real external activity". His father had told him that choice lay between farming and government service. He fully agreed. He appreciated his father's desire that the eldest son should devote himself to the affairs of the estate. But his overmastering thirst for knowledge, of which his hours of patient study during the previous winter at Premukhino were the silent witness, made the life of a country gentleman impossible for him. There remained the civil service in one of its branches. If, however, he entered now without qualifications and without a university degree, he could only serve in so low a rank as to prevent him from rendering any worthy service to his country. In three years at Berlin, on the other hand, he could win his doctor's degree, and would be qualified for a professor's chair at the University of Moscow. Having minutely calculated the cost of carrying out this programme, he begged his father to allow him 2000 roubles a year—"or if that is impossible, 1500 roubles a year"—for not more than three years. He light-heartedly promised that, if this petition were granted, he would never again trouble his parents with a request for money.¹

The letter was despatched on March 24th, 1840; and for nearly three weeks Michael was on tenterhooks. He anxiously begged his sisters to report the faintest sign how his father was taking it, and at length himself addressed a gentle reminder to his parents. At last, in the middle of April, the answer arrived. It was dated March 30th, but its despatch had apparently been delayed. Michael's persuasiveness had done its work. Alexander Bakunin could not refrain from remarking, in reply to Michael's protestations of affection, that "love without works is dead", or from expressing the belief that Michael "like another Don Quixote, had fallen in love with a new Dulcinea". But he gave his consent to his son's project. He explained in some detail that the estate was heavily mortgaged, that Ilya needed a horse, and that Nicholas must have a new uniform. But he promised (in a postscript written in his wife's hand) to allow Michael 1500 roubles a year "if circumstances permit". Michael had reason to be elated. But he was taking no chances. In conversation with Herzen he had suggested that Herzen and some of his friends

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 392-406.

might lend him 5000 roubles; and Herzen had not rejected the idea as impossible. He now wrote modestly proposing that Herzen should provide 2000 roubles at once and 1500 in each of the two following years. It is perhaps significant that, of all those whom Michael could call his friends, Herzen was the one whom he had known the shortest time, of whom he had seen the least, and whose first impressions of his magnetic personality had not yet been effaced. Herzen responded nobly. There was some vagueness about the future. But for the present Herzen would give him 1000 roubles. His departure was assured. The dream of his life was realised.

A broad path, a new life lie before me [he wrote to his sisters on May 9th]. In a few years I shall return to you a new man, a true and real brother and friend, and one full worthy of your love.

If Michael had at this time any secret premonition that he would never of his own free will revisit his native land, he did not confess it to his adoring and mourning sisters.¹

It was to them that his last weeks in Russia must be devoted. He arrived at Premukhino towards the end of May. The lilac, the apple-trees, and the cherry-trees, which he had known from the cradle, were just shedding their blossom. He would never see them in flower again. But now his heart was light, and there was nothing to mar the summer quietness of his beloved home. Except Lyubov, who was dead, and Varvara, who was in Italy, the whole family was assembled. The clash of arms between the generations was silent. Now that Michael had cut himself off from the family and was irrevocably committed to this hazardous adventure, his parents allowed good-will and a lingering affection to swallow up every other emotion. Alexander Bakunin was "mild and gentle and considerate"; and at the moment of parting Michael even became convinced of his mother's love. Having won his freedom, he could afford to be tolerant and forbearing. For the first time since that wonderful summer of 1836, he was at one with the world and at one with himself.

In the middle of June two voices from the outside world intruded on this idyll of harmony and peace. The Beyer girls

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 410, 419-21, 423; Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 637-8; Belinsky, *Pisma*, i. 162.

were on the family estate in central Russia; and in the first flush of his excitement, Michael seems to have forgotten their existence. At length they were invited to come to Premukhino to bid him farewell. But there were practical difficulties. The distance was too great. The summons had come too late. Michael received indignant letters from both girls expressing doubts of the sincerity of his friendship; and Alexandra especially remarked that "some people in their joy forgot their sorrowing friends". Michael wrote them a joint reply in which he reproached them with their scepticism, and rather cruelly called Alexandra "a spoilt child—spoilt by me, though not by fate". But he assured them that they would live with him "in the broad and free kingdom of immortal love", and that his spirit would always "be present with you and embrace you in its love". Nobody should be excluded from the sunshine of his parting benevolence.¹

About the same time two letters reached Premukhino from Rome—from Varvara and from Stankevich. Stankevich, whose lung trouble had reached an acute stage, was seriously ill. Varvara, who had been staying in Naples, was now with him. It had long been an open secret that Varvara worshipped Stankevich, and that Stankevich had transferred to her the affection he had once felt for Lyubov. Michael and his sisters were characteristically more elated that they had at last come together than depressed by the news of Stankevich's illness. Stankevich was for him, Michael wrote to Varvara, the only man, and she the only woman "in the full sense of that word". To both he wrote gaily and triumphantly of his impending departure for Berlin.

The parting came a few days after these letters were written. Michael took leave of his parents and of Premukhino; and brothers and sisters drove together the first stage to Kozitsino. Here Michael bade farewell to Tatyana and Alexandra and three of his brothers, and on the same day continued the journey, alone with Paul and Alexis, to Torzhok. It was evening, and all three were weeping as the carriage bore them on—away from Premukhino, and nearer and nearer to the irrevocable moment of separation. Michael long remembered the scene, and the song of the thrush in the bushes which sped them on their way. At Torzhok the two remaining brothers were left

¹ Kornilov, *Molodye Gody*, pp. 675-6; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 430; iii. 4.

behind. Michael went on alone to Tver, and thence to Petersburg, which he reached on June 26th—three days before his ship was due to sail.¹

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The only detailed record of Michael's last three days in Russia comes from the pen of Belinsky, who must be accounted a hostile witness. After a long series of fluctuations, Belinsky now believed himself to have "solved the riddle" of Michael's character. He was convinced of Michael's treachery to Botkin; and he had recently described him, in a letter to Botkin, as "a man with a marvellous head, but definitely without a heart, and with as much warm blood as stale salt cod". In this mood he learned with trepidation (for he still feared Michael's power over him) that Michael was coming to Petersburg to "discuss everything in detail and have an explanation with him". On arrival in Petersburg, Michael put up at a hotel where, being in funds, he took a large room at four roubles a day. On the evening of his arrival he called on Panaev. Panaev, who took his opinions from Belinsky, received him politely but coldly. Katkov, who, unknown to Michael, was lodging with Panaev, did not appear. But when he learned from Panaev that Michael intended to visit Belinsky on the following morning, Katkov conceived the plan of paying off his old score against the Moscow scandalmonger. Early next morning he ensconced himself in Belinsky's flat. Belinsky was clearly relieved not to face the formidable Michael alone. He does not record what passed between him and Katkov. But he can scarcely have failed to realise that Katkov's presence foreboded a painful scene.

It was after twelve o'clock when Belinsky, with beating heart, saw Michael approaching—"a long, ungainly figure in a filthy student's cap"—and called to him from the window to come up. They met in the hall. Belinsky would have avoided giving him a Judas kiss. But Michael threw himself into his arms, and succeeded in touching him with his "coarse lips". They went through the bedroom into the sitting-room, where Michael suddenly found himself face to face with his adversary. Katkov at once opened fire by thanking Michael ironically for having kindly intervened in his affairs. Michael, taken utterly

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 427-9, 431-3; iii. 6, 151.

by surprise, retreated into the bedroom and sat down on the divan. Katkov followed him, waiting for an answer. "Facts!" said Michael at length in a tone of feigned indifference. "Facts, I want facts!" "Facts!" echoed Katkov. "You have torn my reputation to shreds. You are a cad, sir." At this Michael sprang up from the divan and shouted angrily, though without originality: "You are a cad yourself". Then Katkov venomously fired his last shot: "Eunuch!"

Belinsky saw Michael's body quiver "as from an electric shock". But it was Katkov who first raised his hand and pushed his adversary away, thereby constituting himself physically as well as morally the aggressor. Michael seized his walking-stick and turned it on his assailant. In the struggle for its possession it somehow struck the ceiling and brought down a shower of plaster, while Belinsky, undignified and helpless, shouted to the combatants to desist. Michael secured the first round by freeing the stick and bringing it down heavily on Katkov's back. Then Katkov closed and, while Michael bent back almost double to avoid him, spat twice into his averted face. Having inflicted this accumulation of insults on his victim, Katkov retired to the next room, but returned a moment later to administer a parting thrust. In the agony of the struggle Michael had exclaimed: "After this, it must come to pistols between us". Katkov only wished now to remind him of the threat. "Listen, sir," he said slowly and distinctly, "if you have a single drop of warm blood in your veins, do not forget your words." And without waiting for an answer he stalked out of the flat.

Belinsky was left alone with the wounded lion. There were bright red spots on Michael's cheeks. His lips, swollen with rage and humiliation, formed a parallelogram; and Belinsky oddly wondered how his sisters could ever bear to kiss them. After some moments of embarrassed silence or still more embarrassed conversation, Belinsky made the excuse of an engagement, and they went out together. The same evening Belinsky called on Michael, apparently by arrangement; and Michael handed him a note for Katkov in which he explained that, in view of the strict Russian laws against duelling, it would be better to transfer the encounter to Berlin. Michael was a swashbuckler of another and a finer mould than Katkov. He may have been, as his enemies alleged, a physical coward. Considerations of per-

sonal honour meant nothing to him. His resilient nature was not unduly cast down by this untoward prelude to his European pilgrimage; and he had no intention of allowing a trivial and irrelevant episode to stand in the way of his destiny.¹

The next day was spent in preparations for the departure. In the society of Herzen and his wife, who received him kindly, Michael found some consolation for the hostility of his older friends. Of all the rest who, in Moscow or in Petersburg, had played a part in the story of his early manhood, not one remained whom he need regret. He parted from them with "sincere delight". There was only the dear and faithful circle at Premukhino; and during the last night, the night of June 28th-29th, pen in hand, he bade farewell to each of them in turn. Nicholas must take his place as the leader of the younger generation at Premukhino. There had been a moment when he feared that Nicholas was passing under the influence of Belinsky. He warned him once more against this danger.

Cling closely and firmly to our little circle, and remember that no Belinskys or Botkins can ever replace it.

Belinsky is a good man, but he is not one of us, not a man of our kind. Be the friend and protector of our sisters, teach them and learn from them. To learn from one another is the best thing in the world. You can learn much from them—I have found that by experience.

Then came the turn of the others. Alexandra was never to forget that she had in him a warm and sincere friend, and was to be frank and write to him often. Paul and Alexis were to remember their promises to look after their father and their sisters. Alexander was to write to him sometimes, to persevere with his drawing lessons, and to "try to secure a real, definite content for his spiritual life". Tatyana was kept for the last:

Dear, beautiful, wise Tatyana, good-bye, my sweet, holy friend. Be happy, so far as you can—and never take away your love from me. It is more indispensable to me than mine to you.

Everything that enters ever so little into your life must be known to me. Write often.

There was no message to his parents. He would write them a dutiful letter when he reached Lübeck.²

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, ii. 124, 145-9.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 434-6; iii. 1, 6.

When he finished this letter it was six o'clock in the morning. He remembered the Beyer girls whom he had unwittingly offended by his neglect. He had meant so much to them during the past six years, and they, in the final analysis, meant so little to him. But at the moment of parting he could recall the moments of enthusiasm they had shared together, and feel a glow of sincere affection.

Everything that enters into my life [he wrote, inverting the phrase he had just penned for Tatyana] shall be known to you. May I hope for the same from you? Do not abandon me, my friends. That would be a terrible, an irreparable loss for me.¹

He packed his belongings and, Herzen alone accompanying him, went on board the tender which was to convey him down the Neva to Cronstadt, where the sea-going steamer waited. At the mouth of the Neva a hurricane descended, and the tender put back. As they approached once more the quays and buildings which Michael had not thought to see again for long years, Herzen quoted the quatrain in which Pushkin hailed Petersburg as the city of "*ennui*, cold and granite". Michael refused to leave the boat, and, as Herzen said good-bye and took his departure, stood there motionless in the blinding rain, a gaunt lonely figure in a black cloak.

The tender reached Cronstadt the same night; and at midday on June 30th, 1840, the steamer sailed out into the Baltic. The voyage was stormy, and most of the passengers were sea-sick. But Michael, enraptured by the novel and tremendous spectacle of a turbulent sea, could hardly tear himself away from the deck. The peaceful Russian shore was left behind. The tempest was henceforth to be his chosen element. The island of Bornholm, with its lofty cliffs and half-ruined castle, conjured up romantic recollections of Heine and of Scott's *Pirate*. The weather cleared. There were magnificent sunsets and sunrises and moonlit nights over the sea; and on the fifth day the ship reached Travemünde, the port of Lübeck. Michael spent three days in Hamburg ("the German girls are very nice", he wrote from here, "and all say '*Jawohl*'"), and four—for there was still no railway—on the road from Hamburg to Berlin. At last, one evening at six o'clock, the Prussian capital was reached. It was July 13th

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, ii. 436-8.

or, by the Western calendar which must now be substituted for the Russian, July 25th.¹

In Berlin news awaited Michael that Stankevich had died just a month before in Varvara's arms at Novi, a village in northern Italy where they had halted on their way from Rome to Como. Another of his few remaining links with the past had snapped. A new world lay open before him.

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, vi. 469; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 1-2, 6-7.

BOOK II

THE REVOLUTIONARY ADVENTURER

“Whether I shall split on a rock or, worse still, run on a sand-bank, I do not know; I only know that I shall not slacken speed so long as there is a drop of blood left in me.”

MICHAEL BAKUNIN to Paul Bakunin and Turgenev
(November 1842)

“People like you grow in the hurricane, and ripen better in stormy weather than in sunshine.”

ADOLF REICHEL to Michael Bakunin
(April 19th, 1850)

CHAPTER 8

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

MICHAEL BAKUNIN did not allow the tidings of Stankevich's death to damp his determined optimism. Such an end, he declared, was "a complete victory over death—a blessed revelation of immortality"; and Varvara wrote that she was "once more hopeful, calm and full of love and benediction". Varvara, now once more alone in the world with her child, came to Berlin to join her brother; and she and Michael set up housekeeping together in furnished lodgings. Old Alexander Bakunin, who had not been initiated into the secret of Varvara's last journey with Stankevich, was firmly convinced that her meeting with Michael in Berlin was part of a pre-arranged plan which had been deliberately concealed from him; and he wrote bitterly reproaching Michael with his lack of frankness. It was the old man's fate to be deceived when he suspected nothing, and to suspect deception where none existed.¹

Young Bakunin had not been many days in Berlin when he chanced upon another blue-eyed giant from Russia, four years his junior and destined one day for a fame still wider than his own. Ivan Turgenev had already been abroad for two years and knew the game. Bakunin, for all his native assurance, was still stricken by the bewilderment of a foreign city; and he would at this moment have embraced any compatriot, even one less attractive and less obviously well-matched with himself, than Turgenev. In a few days—it may have been in a few hours—a lifelong friendship had been sworn.

Ivan Turgenev was the younger son of a widow. He escaped at twenty from the yoke of his mother; at twenty-five he assumed that of Pauline Viardot, which lasted him for the remaining forty years of his life. In the interval between these two salient events, he worshipped several minor divinities. One of them was Nicholas Stankevich, whom he met in Berlin during his first autumn abroad, and again at Rome in the last

¹ Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, p. 16; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 8, 27.

year of Stankevich's life. Worship of Stankevich implied devotion to Hegel and to metaphysics; and though philosophy struck no roots in young Turgenev's mind, he paid tribute to the ruling fashion. Now Stankevich was dead, and he needed a new idol. He met Bakunin, Stankevich's pupil and friend.

Stankevich brought us together [he wrote within six weeks of the meeting], and death shall not part us. How much I owe to you, I can scarcely say, I cannot say. My feelings are like great waves, and have not yet calmed down sufficiently to find issue in words. On the title-page of my encyclopaedia¹ is written: Stankevich died June 24th, 1840. And beneath: I met Bakunin July 20th, 1840.² From the whole of my past life, I wish to carry no other memories.

Bakunin, on his side, was not less deeply impressed. He informed his sisters at Premukhino that, "after you, the Beyers, and Stankevich", Turgenev was the one man with whom he had "become really intimate".³

The two friends quickly became inseparable. Bakunin found that life with a spoilt child and an anxious mother had its drawbacks. In October he parted company with Varvara and joined Turgenev in a flat close by; and here the two young men, in the first bloom of their friendship, sat night after night talking of their beliefs, their fancies, and their ambitions, Turgenev hugging the stove and Bakunin sprawling on the divan. Or they would stride down Unter den Linden to their favourite café where foreign newspapers were to be had, attracting universal attention by their enormous height and fine, expressive features. The rôle of leader and teacher suited Bakunin as perfectly as that of disciple satisfied his companion; and it was better still when Bakunin discovered that Turgenev's purse rivalled the widow's cruse as a source of loans, large or small, granted against indefinite promises of repayment in an invisible future. It was, from all points of view, an ideal alliance.⁴

But Bakunin in these days was nothing if not earnest. For every disciple of Stankevich, Berlin was primarily the home of philosophy; and though Hegel had been dead nine years, philo-

¹ Evidently Hegel's *Encyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*.

² The date is either incorrect or Russian Style (though the date of Stankevich's death is Western Style). Bakunin reached Berlin on July 13/25th.

³ Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, p. 52; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 59.

⁴ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 25, 40, 44-5, 85; Annenkov, *Literaturniya Vospominaniya*.

sophy at Berlin still meant the Hegelian system. The reigning professor was Werder, a faithful disciple, whose thoughts had seldom strayed beyond the limits of the classroom. Bakunin eagerly prepared to sit at his feet. "*Zwar weiss ich viel, doch möchte ich alles wissen*", he quoted cheerfully from the pedant in *Faust*. His impatience to learn had not even allowed him to wait till October, when the university reassembled. He borrowed from another student the notes of Werder's lectures on logic, and not only studied them himself but undertook to copy them out and send them home to Paul. When term began, he would attend Werder's lectures on philosophy and courses on aesthetics, theology, and physics, and by way of recreation would fence and ride. Bakunin looked forward with no less confidence than Turgenev to the wonderful winter they would spend together in Berlin.

How much of this ambitious scholastic programme was actually carried out is not recorded. But Bakunin duly matriculated at the university, obtaining a diploma which described him as *vir iuvenis ornatissimus*; and he and Turgenev, by their regular appearance at Werder's sparsely attended course on logic, won for themselves the reputation of enthusiastic Hegelians. Later he came across Schelling, the old idol of the romantics. Schelling was something of a disappointment. Bakunin found his lectures "interesting but rather insignificant". But this did not prevent him from participating with enthusiasm in the celebration of Schelling's jubilee. When the torchlight procession of students drew up in front of the old man's house, Bakunin's stentorian *hurrah* could be heard above the thunder of cheering, and his whole face became, in the picturesque description of a bystander, "one enormous open mouth". Bakunin loved noise, as he loved every other form of spontaneous human activity, for its own sake, and was always ready to take a demonstrative, if not a systematic, part in the life of the university.¹

Social life was not less absorbing. Once launched in Berlin, the Bakunins found no dearth of company. Among the Russians there were Efremov, who had been with Varvara at Stankevich's death-bed, and two other friends of Stankevich, the Frolovs,

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 10, 18, 32-3, 37, 78; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Draganov, p. xx.

whom Michael now met for the first time. There was a baron of German extraction from the Baltic provinces, who has written of evenings spent with Bakunin and Turgenev over Russian tea and cold beef, but has modestly withheld his name. Presently Katkov appeared on the scene and was greeted with every outward show of affability. The excitement of Berlin had blotted from Bakunin's mind every disagreeable recollection. Only Katkov remained embarrassed, and took his revenge many years later by contemptuous references to Bakunin in his memoirs. Among the Germans you could not miss Müller-Strübing, who for a whole decade made it his business to initiate Russian tourists into the German mysteries of pure thinking and deep drinking. Müller-Strübing was a journalist, a man of letters, a critic of art, music, and the drama, and a philosopher. In his youth he had dreamed of politics, and his dreams had cost him five years in prison. Now nobody quite knew how he lived. But most Russian visitors to Berlin were rich and generous; and they regaled him, in return for his services, on those Strassburg patties which, next to beer, art, and metaphysics, were the chief delight of his life. Perhaps his principal importance was that he helped so many Russians, Bakunin among them, to form for themselves a lifeiong picture of the typical German—metaphysical, sentimental, ubiquitous, kindly, gluttonous, and above all supremely ridiculous.¹

But the most famous German who came within the circle of Bakunin and Turgenev was Varnhagen von Ense. Varnhagen was a retired diplomat of literary tastes with a gift for biography. He had been in attendance at the Congress of Vienna, and had represented the King of Prussia at the court of Württemberg. Natural inclination or diplomatic experience made him an inveterate celebrity-hunter; and the greatest celebrity whom he ever collected was Rahel Levin, the uncrowned queen of the German romantics, whom he married. Now in his declining years he was busy editing the literary remains of his deceased wife, keeping a meticulous diary, collecting autographs, and patronising new movements in art and literature. In the late 'thirties the name of Pushkin had travelled across the eastern frontier of Prussia, and Russian literature became the fashionable cult. Varnhagen embraced it eagerly. He sought out

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiv. 314-19; *Russkaya Starina* (May 1884).

in Berlin Russians of literary distinction like Stankevich and Granovsky; and he took Russian lessons from a friend of Stankevich named Neverov.

Bakunin's first introduction to Varnhagen was characteristic. He called one morning to apologise for having lost a letter to Varnhagen which Neverov had entrusted to him. Varnhagen was still in bed. But this did not affect his dignity or his presence of mind. He received the young man and his apology. Tactful and well-informed as ever, he recollected that Bakunin had once published a Russian translation of some fragments of Bettina's correspondence with Goethe. Has the translation ever been completed? Bakunin, with a magnificent disregard for truth, replied that it had, and that he had lost the manuscript. Varnhagen thought his visitor "an upstanding young man with a free and lofty mind". But he failed to record in his diary the remainder of the conversation. Herzen relates how Bakunin and Turgenev, eager to "plunge into the whirlpool of reality", called on Varnhagen and begged him to introduce them to "a pretty actress". But this account is of doubtful authenticity. Bakunin had no use for this kind of reality; and Turgenev needed no introduction to it from Varnhagen. The lady to whom Varnhagen, in fact, introduced them was the famous singer, Henriette Solman. But she was no longer young nor, presumably, pretty, and she had abandoned the stage for a *salon*, where she strove to maintain the tradition of the immortal Rahel. The two young men put on their best velvet waistcoats in order to visit her, the one green, and the other purple. Varnhagen also introduced Bakunin to Bettina von Arnim. She, too, was well past fifty—"a very little woman", according to a contemporary account, "with not a vestige of good looks, her hair dyed and scarcely combed out, wearing an old black silk dress put on so carelessly that nothing seemed in its right place". Bettina in the flesh made a decidedly less romantic impression on Bakunin than her letters had done in his salad days. But he paid her several visits, and noticed that they usually lasted for three hours.¹

It was a miscellaneous and cosmopolitan society in which Bakunin and Turgenev moved; and its occupations were as

¹ Varnhagen, *Tagebücher*, i. 232; Herzen, ed. Lemke, xiii. 235; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 85-6, 93, 266-7. The "contemporary account" of Bettina von Arnim will be found in Lucy Cohen, *Lady Rothschild and Her Daughters* (1935).

diverse as its composition. On Wednesdays everyone flocked to the Beethoven concerts where the great symphonies were performed in turn. The choice was significant. Beethoven was as yet not a universal classic, but the musical interpreter of German idealism. The young romantics of the 'forties, in Herzen's words, "ignored Rossini, tolerated Mozart (though they found him childish and weak), and conducted philosophical investigations into every chord of Beethoven". After the concerts—and often on other evenings as well—there was a gathering at Varvara's flat. She had a large, pleasant room on the third floor, with plants in the windows, and a canary that flew about at liberty, and a bullfinch in a cage; and Michael and Turgenev helped her to dispense Russian tea and smoked tongue to her guests. The evening was spent in literary readings (one night Byron's *Cain* was read in a German translation) or in discussions of philosophy or art. Only politics were taboo; for current affairs seemed infinitely insignificant in comparison with the eternal verities. The great Werder himself, who found Bakunin's "recklessness" refreshing after the dull pedantry of his German pupils, would sometimes put in an appearance. On one occasion he read to them the first act of a poetical drama on Christopher Columbus written by himself. On another, he "completely reassured" Varvara by a metaphysical defence of the immortality of the soul. "We have scarcely a moment's peace", wrote Varvara to her sisters. These young people might have found it difficult to give to those at home a clear account of their aims and achievements. But there could be no doubt that life was crowded and earnest and highly important.¹

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Yet for all the intensity and excitement of these new experiences, Bakunin was still essentially a stranger in Western Europe. When he embarked at Cronstadt in the summer of 1840, he had no thought of renouncing his country, and did not dream that he would never stand on Russian soil again as a free man. Even as late as the spring of 1842 he still believed, or allowed his friends to believe, that his goal was the chair of philosophy in the University of Moscow. During the first

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 22, 43, 66, 86; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiii. 14; Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, pp. 16, 42.

months of exile his thoughts, as his voluminous correspondence testifies, were constantly at Premukhino; and his fondest wish was that those who were dear to him should come and share the moral and intellectual benefits which he was reaping from his temporary sojourn abroad.

He thought first of Paul. Nicholas, the next of the brothers in age to Michael, had never been close to him in spirit, and, besides, was just about to marry. But Paul had always been his favourite. Paul was as devoted as himself to philosophy, and was longing to sit with him at Werder's feet. Paul must come to Berlin. His parents would not object; for Turgenev would lend the money. And when Paul's own journey had been decided on, then and only then must he broach the question of bringing Michael's darling Tatyana with him. These projects fill Michael's letters to Premukhino during the spring of 1841.

So far as Tatyana was concerned, there was nothing to be done. Away from Michael she was no fighter. She was too affectionate by nature to give her parents the pain of a proposal to which they would never of their own free will consent. But Paul's journey was approved with surprising alacrity. Paul and Alexandra Beyer had become involved in one of those sentimental entanglements which so fatally occurred whenever Beyers and Bakunins met. Paul was twenty-one, and Alexandra several years older; and Alexander Bakunin for once saw the wisdom of diverting his son's mind by foreign travel. In August 1841, a year and a month after Michael, Paul reached Berlin.¹

His departure had at the last been so sudden that there was no time to warn Varvara and Michael. They were absent from Berlin on a summer excursion to western Germany and had left no address. Paul followed them and at last ran them to earth at Ems—already a resort much favoured by Russian tourists. They spent some weeks together in Ems, visited Frankfurt, inspected the battlefield of Lützen and the monument of Gustavus Adolphus, and proceeded to the pleasant city of Dresden, where Varvara and Paul decided to winter. The decision to divide forces suggests that a certain strain had been placed on family affection. In October 1841 Michael returned to

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, i. 93; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 44-5, 51-3, 58; Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, pp. 68, 71.

Berlin to pursue his philosophical studies—alone, as he remarked, for the first time in his life.¹

Alone, for Turgenev had in the meanwhile gone back to Russia and, armed with “complete full powers” from Michael, was at this very moment paying a long-expected and fateful six-day visit to Premukhino. He was a captivated and captivating guest. His good looks and easy manners charmed everyone, including Alexis with whom he wrestled, making the floor quiver beneath his weight when he was thrown; and Alexander with whom he drew caricatures; and Tatyana who, prepared in advance to worship Michael’s friend, fell headlong and passionately in love. Tatyana was in her twenty-seventh year. Save perhaps for a fleeting inclination for Belinsky, she had hitherto loved no man except Michael and her other brothers. But the departure of Michael had lifted the unnatural restraint which his dominant influence placed on her emotions. In the short space of six days she was filled with a consuming passion such as she had never dreamed of, and was carried into a world where even Michael had never been able to transport her.

They met at Torzhok in December, and in Moscow in the following spring. Turgenev was full of amiable feelings for his friend’s sister. But he was no true romantic. He had none of that fatal disposition of the Bakunin to complicate the straightforward phenomenon of sexual attraction with rarefied emotions and metaphysical disquisitions. He was not so much a philanderer as a hedonist. He had celebrated his return to Russia by a liaison with a blonde seamstress of his mother’s, who would shortly bear him a child. There was no place in his plan of life for Tatyana Bakunin. The starved and love-sick girl was clear-sighted enough, through nights of weeping, to know her fate. There is extant a letter which she wrote to Turgenev in the summer of 1842 declaring her “unasked and unwanted” love—a love which nourished no hopes, made no claims, and knew no pride. Yet some pride she had. It irked her now that Michael should have lived, and should still in part be living, on Turgenev’s bounty which he could never repay.²

Meanwhile Michael, ignorant of Tatyana’s tragedy and

¹ Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, p. 73; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 60, 65, 67, 69-70; iv. 232.

² Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, pp. 75-7, 115-16, 222.

innocent of scruples about Turgenev's money, had established himself in a solitary flat in the Dorotheenstrasse in Berlin. He consorted almost exclusively with Germans—Müller-Strübing, and others who are no more than passing names.¹ He added Schelling ("The Philosophy of Revelation") and Ranke ("Modern History") to his lecture list, and readings of Shakespeare to his recreations. The symphonies of Beethoven gave him a touch of home-sickness for Premukhino and for Varvara and Paul in Dresden. He had an abscess on the right cheek which prevented him from sleeping for a week, and later he was attacked by toothache. "Solitude", he wrote to his sisters at Premukhino, "is always valuable to me, it compels me to penetrate into myself." But there is a certain note of dissatisfaction and depression about his letters during the winter of 1841-2; and it was obvious that a crisis in his life was approaching.²

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The crisis coincided with the breaking of Michael's last personal contacts with his native land by the return of Varvara and Paul to Premukhino. Varvara went first. Her return had been continually under discussion since the previous spring, when Alexander Bakunin wrote begging his daughter to come back to Russia and be reconciled with her husband. This paternal intervention provoked all Michael's rebellious ardour. It was the scent of battle to an old war-horse. It would be a crime, he declared, to allow Varvara to go back to Russia unless she and her child were guaranteed against all interference by her husband. He had no confidence in his father, who was wholly on Dyakov's side; and Turgenev, now back in Russia, was commissioned to "negotiate with brother Nicholas about Varvara's return". Varvara halted, as of old, between desire for freedom and pity, mingled with a sneaking sort of respect, for her husband and the father of her child. She was once again repelled by Michael's callous and humiliating attitude towards Dyakov and by his masterful treatment of herself. But she was conscious of his power over her, and sometimes regarded him

¹ Engels, who came to Berlin in October 1841, also lodged in the Dorotheenstrasse, and also attended lectures of Werder and Schelling. But the two young men did not meet till some years later.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 66-7, 73-4, 92.

with an emotion akin to fear. In the end he was always the winner, even though she grudged him the victory. "You remember", wrote Michael of her at this time to Tatyana, "how she would rebel and decide to listen to nobody and do everything on her own—and then give way. So it was now."

The struggle lasted several weeks. In November 1841 Varvara sent to Michael from Dresden for his approval a letter she had written to her husband. It smacked too much of surrender for Michael's taste. He contemptuously tore it up, and wrote another for her to send. A few days later Michael received a letter from Nicholas, who had acted as intermediary with Dyakov. Dyakov had promised never to attempt to see Varvara, and to visit his son "rarely, very rarely"; and on those terms Michael at last "consented" to Varvara's return. But winter travel was an impossibility; and Varvara did not actually start until June 1842. During these last months few letters seem to have passed between brother and sister. Michael visited Varvara and Paul in Dresden at Christmas, but Varvara left Germany without seeing him again.

We tried to understand each other [he wrote to Varvara after her return], we tried to be friends, but we could not, and for that neither was to blame. . . . I do not deny that I was often sharp, and hurt your feelings. But, believe me, Varvara, it hurt me so much too, and I repented every time so sincerely and so bitterly, that you ought to forgive me. Besides, the source of my sharpness was honest. I tried to be your friend, I tried to do by force things which cannot be done by force. It was childish, I admit, and I swear to you that I will never do it again.

But Varvara had broken the spell. There was a rebel in the "little flock"; and one more link with Premukhino had snapped.¹

Paul still remained. Soon after Varvara's departure, at the end of the university year, Michael came from Berlin to join him; and in August Turgenev, fresh from Russia, also arrived in Dresden. But Turgenev was no longer the same affluent benefactor as last year. He was entirely dependent on the good-will of his wealthy but capricious mother, who had tired of keeping her son supplied with sufficient funds to enable his friends to live at his expense. The financial stringency became decidedly uncomfortable. "Tell our parents", wrote Michael sarcastically

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 55, 70-73, 78, 92-3, 117-18.

to Alexis, "that we are learning to live on air, but have not yet completed the training." There was a Russian family in Dresden, the Yazikovs, whom they had first met in Ems. Michael in his odd way was half in love with the mother, and Paul more than half with the daughter. They had borrowed money from the Yazikovs, even before Varvara's departure; and now there was no way of repaying the debt. There were other debts of a more peremptory kind. But for a windfall just received, wrote Michael, they would have been "within two steps of prison".

Something must be done to relieve the situation. The year spent abroad had not developed in Paul any ardent thirst for philosophical studies. But it had served its other purpose. It had disillusioned the young man about the depth of his feelings for Alexandra Beyer—a change which Alexandra bitterly attributed, not to the fickleness of youth, but to the influence of Michael. There was no longer any reason to delay his return. Turgenev was going back to Russia in November, and Michael insisted that Paul should accompany him.¹

There was another and more cogent motive for this decision. A gradual transformation had come during these months over Bakunin's thoughts and ambitions. In the previous winter he had written jauntily to Alexandra Beyer (it was almost his last letter to the passionate sisters) that, unless she came to visit him in Germany, "we may run the risk of never meeting again"; and about the same time, still half in jest and half in earnest, he added a postscript to a letter to his sisters at Premukhino: "Shall we meet again some day? God knows!" When in the summer of 1842 he abandoned Berlin for Dresden, he did more than exchange the Prussian for the Saxon capital. He had exchanged philosophy and an academic life for journalism and politics; and the corollary of this exchange was that he could never return to Russia, the country where politics were outlawed. He had played long enough. It was time to translate his ambitions into reality. In announcing his decision to Premukhino, he quoted *Faust*:

Ich bin zu alt um nur zu spielen,
Zu jung um ohne Wunsch zu sein.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 65, 108, 119-20; Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, p. 215.

He still loved his brothers and sisters deeply and would always love them, but the hazard of life had parted their ways, and marked out for him a different path. He would spend another year in Germany, and then perhaps go on to France. The tone of the letter is curiously matter-of-fact; and it was accompanied by one to Nicholas in which he begged that his share in the paternal estate might be sold, and the proceeds put at his disposal. This hypothetical share in his father's estate continued to haunt him like a will-o'-the-wisp, and to elude his anxious grasp for some thirty years.¹

But calm indifference and cold calculation could not long govern Michael's heart. The parting, when it came, shook him to the roots of his being. He had renounced his country; it meant nothing to him. But Premukhino, its stream, its woodlands, his sisters and his brothers—these had hitherto been part of his inmost being; and when on November 3rd, 1842, he said good-bye to Paul at the Dresden railway station, he knew that, save for a miracle, he would see them no more. On the following day he took his pen and wrote to Premukhino a letter which is unique in the range of his correspondence, and to which justice cannot be done except by copious quotation:

Paul and Turgenev have gone. To-morrow I shall send this letter to Berlin where they will spend three days. When I parted from him, I parted once more—yes, for the last time—from you, from Premukhino, from Russia, from all my past. Paul was to me the last echo of my own dear world of Premukhino. The echo is silent. He is no longer here, and you are no longer here. Good-bye, good-bye! Only strange faces surround me, I hear only strange sounds; the voice of home is silent. I never knew that I loved it so, I did not know that I was still so closely bound up with you. As I write to you, I am crying, crying like a baby. What weakness! But I shall not try to conceal it from you; it is so long since I was able to talk with you. Paul's departure tore off the husk which encased my heart. Once more I feel your presence within me, feel it in order once more, for the last time, to bid you farewell for ever. . . . It was good for me to remain alone that I might weep; before, I did not know what tears were. . . . Yes, I am convinced that these are my last tears; I have nothing further to lose. I have lost everything, bade farewell to everything. Good-bye, my friends, good-bye.

Dear Tatyana, hang my portrait in your room. I had it drawn for

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 91, 94, 115, 120-22, 125-6.

you. Perhaps it will keep me alive in your heart. Confess, my friends, that I have already become to you a ghost about whom you know nothing. My portrait and Paul's stories will bring me to life. Varvara could not do that; she did not know me, and even now does not know me.

Do you remember how once, late on an autumn evening, we imagined pictures in the hedgerow between Lopatino and Mytnits wood? Do you remember how a flock of cranes flew over? Now I am in the country to which the cranes fly from you. Do you remember our walks in Mytnits wood? Have you been along my favourite path this summer? What has happened to my trees in the little wood? We lighted a fire there one spring, in Holy Week. Lyubov was ill then and near to death, and she came in a carriage to join us. . . . Then I went away. God! How my heart was breaking when I said good-bye to papa; how sad I was to leave our poor honoured father, who wished for our happiness but spoiled our lives—spoiled them because he had not faith enough in his own beliefs. Now he has completely shut me out from his heart. If only he knew how I love him! Care for him tenderly, my friends, he is a martyr, he was worthy of a better fate. Then we drove all together to Kozitsino; and then do you remember, sisters, how we said good-bye in the evening? Did you feel then that we should never see one another again? Then do you remember, Alexis, how the three of us drove and cried as we went, and the thrush was singing in the bushes? . . .

A great future awaits me yet. My presentiments cannot deceive me. Oh, if I can achieve only a tiny part of all that is in my heart, I ask nothing more. I do not ask for happiness, I do not think of happiness. Work, hard work in a sacred cause, is what I ask. Before me lies a broad field, and my part will be no mean one. . . .

I am still sad, but my sadness will pass; this has been the last agony of my parting from Russia. Now I am once more strong, fear nothing and am ready to go forward, head erect. But know, my friends, that beyond the seas there lives one who will never cease to be your friend, who thirsts for your love because, apart from you, he has no home of his own in the world. . . .

Good-bye, friends, and yet again good-bye. A wave of the hand, and we will live on without looking back.

Bakunin was too young to live in the past. A fortnight later he wrote gaily that he had been to a court ball, and had danced with the wife of the French Minister.¹

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 148-53, 161.

CHAPTER 9

FAREWELL TO PHILOSOPHY

MICHAEL BAKUNIN was now in his twenty-ninth year. The domestic battles of Premukhino had not impaired the orthodoxy of his political creed; and he had still not sought any political implications in the philosophical debate about Hegelian reality. He might fairly have been described, at the time of his migration from Russia to Germany, as a rebel by temperament and a conservative by family tradition and rational conviction. Since in so headstrong a character as Michael Bakunin temperament in the long run generally outweighs both tradition and reason, his eventual conversion to the revolutionary cause may reasonably be regarded as a foregone conclusion. But the rapidity and completeness of the conversion exhibit symptoms typical both of the Russian aristocrat in general and of Bakunin in particular.

The intense emotion which Bakunin felt for Premukhino was essentially local and personal in character. It was not devotion to his country as a whole or to a national tradition. It embraced the Russian countryside, but certainly not the Russian State. Even (or, perhaps, above all) among members of the Russian nobility, Russian national patriotism in the first half of the nineteenth century was a young and feeble growth. The Russian of the next generation, imbued with the new Slavophil doctrine, could regard the German, the Frenchman, and the Englishman with that mixture of irritation, pity, and contempt which we find, for example, in the pages of Dostoevsky. But to the generation of Herzen, Turgenev, and Bakunin Europe seemed a second, and in most respects a superior, fatherland. All three men spoke and wrote French as readily, and German almost as readily, as their native tongue; and by the time they were thirty, all three, so different in other respects, had come to look on themselves not primarily as Russians, but as citizens of Europe and of the world. While nationalism was engulfing the rest of Europe, the Russian landowning caste still preserved something of the cosmopolitan culture and outlook of the Age

of Enlightenment. It remained, down to the middle of the nineteenth century, a belated but fertile breeding-ground for the international man.

Born and reared in these conditions, Bakunin was innocent of any national tradition strong enough to hamper the free play of his rebellious temperament. Reason was equally helpless; for though Bakunin possessed a nimble and powerful mind, it was to an almost unparalleled degree the servant, not the master, of his impulses. Indiscriminate insubordination to authority is a necessary phase in the development of every normal individual. Bakunin spent his whole life in a phase which most human beings outgrow at some time between the ages of ten and thirty. In this respect, he enjoyed the secret not so much of perpetual youth as of perpetual childhood. The determination of the object against which his rebellions were directed seemed at times a matter of secondary importance. It was decided by more or less transient conditions or motives; and the arguments provided by his reason to justify the revolt were more adventitious still. The pure instinct to rebel, independently of the object or the reason of the rebellion, has never been more strikingly expressed than in the personality of Michael Bakunin.

The process of conversion from domestic to political rebellion which Bakunin underwent in Germany in the year 1842 can most simply be described in terms of German literature and philosophy. Bakunin, in common with most of his Russian contemporaries, had been subject, before he came to Germany at all, to two important German influences: German romanticism and the philosophy of Hegel. When he reached Berlin in 1840, these influences were still paramount in Germany itself; and the intellectual atmosphere which he found there was not different in essence (though perhaps intenser in degree) from that which he had left behind in Russia. Bakunin's first year in Berlin was the conclusion of his Russian, rather than the beginning of his European, period.

The year 1841 proved, however, to be an important turning-point in German thought. In the preceding year, Friedrich Wilhelm IV became King of Prussia. He was an impenitent and imprudent reactionary, who understood nothing of the virtue of letting sleeping dogs lie; and by his provocative attacks on the freedom of thought and speech he earned from the radicals

the ironical title of the "first German revolutionary". Strauss's *Life of Jesus* had been an isolated scandal, and the "Hegelian Left" an obscure and unnoticed clique. But official persecution gave a powerful impetus to the movement. In 1841 Ludwig Feuerbach, of whom Bakunin had dimly heard in Moscow, published *The Essence of Christianity*, which crystallised the mind of the rising generation and marked a philosophical epoch.

Feuerbach's book, which purported to find a materialistic basis for religion, provided a rallying-point for the Hegelian Left or, as the radicals now came to be called, the "Young Hegelians". It is significant of the religious character of the age that the first assault on Hegelian orthodoxy was made on the religious front; and it is significant of the enormous prestige which Hegel, ten years after his death, continued to enjoy, that the insurgents still took cover under his name and professed, not to deny his doctrine, but to interpret it. They proved that the Hegelian system, shorn of those excrescences of State-worship which were the product of the old man's declining years, was a creed not of reaction but of revolution. For if everything that is real is rational, the dialectical method nevertheless proves that everything that is real is in flux. Stagnation cannot therefore in any event be rational; and reason and revolution are triumphantly reconciled. The new doctrine spread like wildfire through the younger generation. Those ardent Hegelians who had hitherto interpreted Hegelianism as political quietism, now plunged headlong into politics, and could plead Hegel, properly interpreted, as their justification. In the 'thirties, to be a Hegelian meant to accept the political world as it was. In the 'forties (except for a few professional philosophers) it meant to be a political revolutionary.¹

Bakunin's first introduction to neo-Hegelianism was effected by Arnold Ruge, a talented mediocrity now remembered chiefly for his short-lived influence on the intellectual development both of Bakunin and of Karl Marx. In 1838 Ruge established, in the university town of Hallé, the *Hallische Jahrbücher*, a journal of philosophy and politics which became the organ of the Hegelian Left, and of which Botkin had already lent Michael a copy in Moscow. The journal began to attract notice and acquire influence in radical circles; and at the end of 1840 the heavy

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 103.

hand of Friedrich Wilhelm intervened to prohibit its further publication. Nothing daunted, Ruge transferred his activities to the milder climate of Saxony. In 1841 the journal reappeared in Dresden, its prestige enhanced and its radical bias accentuated, under the more catholic title of *Deutsche Jahrbücher*. Bakunin first met Ruge when he visited Dresden with Varvara and Paul in the autumn of 1841. He found Ruge "an interesting and notable man", though Ruge rejected "everything that had the slightest trace of mysticism" and displayed "great one-sidedness in everything that concerns religion, art, and philosophy". Bakunin was still an orthodox Hegelian, and was slightly shocked by Ruge's materialistic views. It occurred to him, however, that Ruge might help to shake the Germans out of their smug satisfaction with the "rotten, golden, unchanging mean".¹

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The winter of 1841-2 which he spent alone in Berlin seems to have been the decisive period of Bakunin's conversion. He devoured greedily the mass of pamphlets and dissertations with which the Young Hegelians, under the very nose of the censors, were flooding Germany. He even wrote—or told Ruge that he had written—an anonymous pamphlet on his own account, which research has hitherto failed to identify.² By the time he settled again in Dresden in the summer of 1842, Bakunin was a full-blown Young Hegelian. Ruge discovered that he had "outstripped all the old donkeys in Berlin"; and he, humming the popular air from Meyerbeer's new opera *Les Huguenots*, nicknamed Ruge "Papa Coligny" after the insurgent leader. He was ready to proclaim to the world his conversion to the cause of revolution; and the columns of Ruge's journal were at his disposal. In October the *Deutsche Jahrbücher* published *Reaction in Germany: from the Note-books of a Frenchman*. It bore the signature "Jules Elysard".

The realisation of liberty, declares Bakunin in this article, is the burning question of the day—the question which constitutes the fundamental opposition between reaction and democracy.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 65-6.

² An anonymous pamphlet of this period against Schelling, entitled *Schelling and Revelation*, was formerly attributed to Bakunin. But it has now been established beyond doubt that it was the work of Engels.

Contemporary history is dominated by an Hegelian antithesis between the positive (the existing order) and the negative (revolution). Democracy as an ideal has not yet achieved an independent existence. "Democracy as such does not yet express itself in its wealth of affirmation, but only as a denial of the positive". When democracy has overthrown reaction, then and only then it will cease to be mere negation. "There will be a qualitative transformation, a new, living, life-giving revelation, a new heaven and a new earth, a young and mighty world in which all our present dissonances will be resolved into a harmonious whole."

Pending this consummation, reaction and democracy are at deadly strife. Anyone who believes in the possibility of compromise between positive and negative is contemptuously referred to Hegel for the refutation of his fallacy. Compromise was altogether foreign to Bakunin's nature; and the compromisers (or "moderates") come in for far more scathing shafts than the reactionaries (or "positivists"). "The Left say 'Two and two are four'; the Right say 'Two and two are six'; the *juste milieu* says 'Two and two are five'." The reactionaries are beginning to be recognised as an anachronism. The compromisers are the characteristic product of an age which already feels that the days of the existing order are numbered.

All peoples and all men [runs the famous peroration] are full of presentiments. Everyone whose living organs are not paralysed sees with trembling expectation the approach of the future which will utter the decisive word. Even in Russia, in that limitless and snow-covered empire, of which we know so little and which has before it perhaps a great future, even in Russia the dark storm-clouds are gathering! The air is sultry, it is heavy with storms!

And therefore we call to our blinded brothers: Repent! Repent! The Kingdom of God is coming nigh.

Let us put our trust in the eternal spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unsearchable and eternally creative source of all life. The passion for destruction is also a creative passion!¹

Reaction in Germany was a brilliant essay in the popular art of turning the respectable Hegel into a philosopher of revolution. It was the most cogent and closely-reasoned piece of writing which ever came from Bakunin's pen; and it won him, in

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 126-48, 183; iv. 103; Ruge, *Briefwechsel*, i. 273.

advanced circles, a European reputation. Nobody believed in the Frenchman, Jules Elysard; and rumours of the real authorship of the article soon began to spread. They spread to Moscow, where Herzen wrote in his diary: "He is wiping out his former sins—I am completely reconciled to him". They reached Belinsky, who, generous as always, declared that "Michael and he had sought God by different paths, but met at last in the same temple", and wrote him an enthusiastic letter burying the hatchet of their former quarrel. Botkin followed suit. The article enjoyed, in fact, a *succès de scandale*. Bakunin could not suppose that his handiwork would long remain a secret from the Russian authorities, or Ruge that so inflammatory an article would escape the notice of the Saxon censorship. Both had reason to regard their position in Dresden as insecure and precarious.¹

It mattered less to Bakunin than to Ruge. Bakunin had always been reckless about the consequences of his actions; and he was already tiring of Dresden and of Germany. *Reaction in Germany* was not only the culmination of his Hegelian period; it was also his farewell to Hegel. German philosophy in one form or another had dominated his thought for seven years. The moment had come to seek fresh pastures. It was significant that he had chosen a French, not a German, *nom de plume* for the article which announced his programme. A year before he had lighted on Lamennais' *Politique du peuple*, and had found in it a new and exhilarating synthesis of religion and politics, which treated the whole world of German metaphysics as if it had never existed. About the time *Reaction in Germany* appeared, a German professor named Stein published a work entitled *Socialism and Communism in Contemporary France*, which revealed for the first time to the German world the theories of Saint-Simon and Fourier, of Proudhon and Pierre Leroux. The visionary and utopian schemes of these French writers seemed to Bakunin practical and concrete in comparison with the abstractions of German metaphysics. Even Feuerbach himself was "unreal" and "purely theoretical"; and the rest of these German philosophers with their "theoretical recipes for salvation" were merely "comic". Neo-Hegelian radicalism was theory. French socialism was practice. Philosophy could only

¹ Herzen, ed. Lemke, iii. 96; Belinsky, *Pisma*, ii. 317; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 184.

negate the past. The future belonged to men of action. Once Bakunin had formulated the alternative in this way, there could be no doubt about his choice.¹

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It was sealed by the appearance in Dresden of a new and striking figure. In 1841 there was published in Switzerland a small volume of verse under the title *Poems of One Who is Alive*, which achieved a remarkable popularity in German-speaking lands, and ran through half a dozen editions in less than two years. The poems, a passionate appeal for political liberty, were the work of a young man named Georg Herwegh and were the culminating expression of a movement which, under the name of "Young Germany", had been slowly gaining ground for ten years. "Young Germany" held up the progressive ideas of France (where the tradition of revolution was still alive) as a model to the dull, stagnant, philistine Teuton; and its two most famous representatives, Börne and Heine, both of them Jews, were exiles in Paris. It tilted both at the sentimental vapourings of romanticism (though it sometimes imitated them) and at the metaphysical subtleties of the schools. The writers and poets of "Young Germany" were not themselves conspicuous as men of action; but in theory they preached the primacy of action over feeling and thought. In both respects, Herwegh was a typical representative of the movement.

Herwegh's visit to Dresden in October 1842 occupied the brief interval between the publication of *Reaction in Germany* and the departure of Paul and Turgenev for Russia. Herwegh was in the midst of a triumphal progress through the German States, where he was receiving the respectful homage of all good democrats. He devoted a week to the democrats of Dresden, where he shared lodgings with the Bakunins and Turgenev. It was an auspicious meeting. Herwegh seemed well suited to fill the place in Michael's heart which Turgenev's departure would soon leave vacant. Turgenev was an aristocrat, Herwegh the son of a hotel-keeper. But superficially they had many qualities in common. Both were good-looking (a contemporary notes that Herwegh had "the finest eyes he had ever seen in a man") and remarkably gifted. Both had in their nature a deep vein of

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 62-4, 154, 175-6; iv. 103.

vanity and self-indulgence, combined with a strong distaste for work and for responsibility. For both, the ideal friend was one who would admire them, guide them, and settle their destinies for them on comfortable lines. Michael Bakunin who, beside Herwegh, felt like "a Russian *moujik*", succumbed once more to the fascination of protecting the weaker vessel. He had never met anyone so "delicately constituted" as Herwegh. It was the kind of fascination which was wholly lacking in the solid, prosaic, theoretical Ruge.¹

The attraction was strengthened on Bakunin's side by the discovery how closely Herwegh's ideas coincided with his own. Herwegh derided theorists and sentimentalists, and called himself a man of action. Bakunin did the same with all the fervour of the new convert. Herwegh had, for the past two or three years, been denouncing the political backwardness of Germany and looking to France for salvation. Bakunin's thoughts, for the past two or three months, had been turned the same way. Herwegh reintroduced him to George Sand, whose personality acquired for Bakunin a new social and political significance; and they had long discussions of her latest masterpiece *Consuelo*. Before the week of Herwegh's sojourn in Dresden was over, friendship and alliance was sworn between them. The alliance had its business, as well as its romantic, side. Herwegh had recently assumed the editorship of a German radical journal published in Switzerland, the *Deutsche Bote*; and "Jules Elysard" would naturally become a welcome contributor.²

Herwegh left Dresden on November 2nd, 1842, and spent eight eventful weeks on Prussian soil. In ten days he was betrothed to the daughter of a wealthy Jewish silk merchant of Berlin; and a week later, on November 19th, he was summoned to an audience by Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who, in a mood of eccentric impulsiveness, assured the democratic poet that he liked "honourable opponents". The principal motive of this odd gesture was probably curiosity. It did not, at any rate, prevent the issue, some days later, of a decree banning the *Deutsche Bote* throughout Prussia. Herwegh, who had supposed himself to have made as rapid a conquest of the King as he had of his bride, addressed to Friedrich Wilhelm an eloquent letter of

¹ Herwegh, *Briefwechsel*, p. 24; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 183-4.

² Ruge, *Briefwechsel*, i. 284; Herwegh, *Briefwechsel*, p. 272.

protest. By accident or design, he allowed the letter to appear in the press; and as the result of this indiscretion, he was given notice to quit Prussia within twenty-four hours. He left Berlin on December 29th. The Saxon authorities would not allow him to remain in Leipzig, and he went straight on to Switzerland.¹

Suddenly and unexpectedly, Bakunin decided to join him in his retreat. The notoriety of *Reaction in Germany* had already made him anxious; and now he was further compromised by his known association with Herwegh. He began to be haunted by fear that the Saxon authorities would arrest him and hand him over to Russia. As he afterwards admitted, these fears were premature. There had been no need for him to fly "like a gamecock before the hawk"; and if alarm had been the sole motive of his flight, Bakunin would have acted on this occasion, for the first and last time in his life, with an excess of caution. But there were other reasons. Bakunin was completely infatuated with his new friend, whose glory shone still more brightly since his recent adventures. Separation had become unbearable. If Herwegh had gone to America, Bakunin wrote afterwards in the *Confession*, he would have gone with him. Nor could more sordid considerations be forgotten. Bakunin, when he migrated to Dresden, had left debts behind him in Berlin. Now his debts in Dresden, including a loan from Ruge, exceeded the substantial total of 2000 thalers. He had hitherto fobbed off his creditors with the hope of grants from his parents or from Turgenev. But the position was becoming uncomfortable. He borrowed a further 250 thalers from Ruge and, in the first days of January 1843, hurried away to join Herwegh.²

There were perhaps only two people in Dresden who were sincerely distressed at Bakunin's departure. Some months earlier, before Paul and Turgenev departed, he had made the acquaintance of Adolf Reichel, a young teacher of music at the Conservatorium. Adolf had a sister Matilda; and the impression of Bakunin's personality on both brother and sister was vivid. He would come often to their house to hear Reichel play his favourite Beethoven or, if Reichel was out, to chat with Matilda. For Matilda these casual conversations were "a second baptism

¹ Herwegh, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 25-37.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 172-3, 209; iv. 104-5; Ruge, *Briefwechsel*, i. pp. 307-8.

of the spirit". But while they were never too long for her, she noticed that Bakunin was always in a hurry to get away; and it soon became clear that it had once more been his fate to inspire a passion which he could not return. It was about this time that he wrote to his brother Alexis that he "had tried to fall in love, but it hadn't come off", and to Paul that he had "not yet met *her* and probably never would". There was no hope for poor Matilda. But though she afterwards married, she remained faithful to Bakunin's memory, wrote him letters of a strongly religious flavour, and tried to visit him seven years later in prison. Adolf Reichel, the gentle musician who cared nothing for politics, was for more than thirty years the most loyal and patient of Bakunin's friends.¹

Bakunin joined Herwegh in Karlsruhe. On January 6th, 1843, they were in Strassburg—Bakunin's first step on French soil; and a few days later they reached Zürich.²

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 388; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 107, 164.

² Herwegh, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 104, 113; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 172-3 (where No. 461 appears to be wrongly dated).

CHAPTER 10

SWISS INTERLUDE

THERE was a pause while Bakunin took stock of the situation and looked about him for new worlds to conquer. The momentary diffidence which he had felt on his first arrival in Berlin two and a half years before, overtook him again in Zürich. Everything west of Berlin and Dresden was strange and unfamiliar; and he knew nobody except Herwegh. Herwegh was no political leader or organiser and, for the moment, was absorbed in the preparations for his brilliant marriage. Bakunin lived alone, just outside Zürich, in a room that looked across the lake to the snow-clad mountains. He drank in the hitherto undreamed-of beauties of the Swiss landscape. He rowed with Herwegh on the lake, and they "dreamed and laughed and were sad together"; and he loved his companion "as brother loves sister"—not without a certain air of protective condescension towards the weaker nature. Early in February Bakunin climbed the Uetliberg, where he found already in bloom the snowdrops and "little purple flowers that smell like hyacinth"; and he pressed three of the blossoms and sent them in his next letter to Premukhino. Philosophy was forgotten, and politics could wait.

Sometimes I lie here for hours together on the divan [he wrote to Paul] gazing on the lake and the mountains, which are specially beautiful in the setting sun, watching the tiniest changes in the picture, changes that follow one another without ceasing; and I think, think of everything, and feel sad and cheerful and merry; and everything in front of me is hidden in a mist.

In these idyllic surroundings he spent hours on end devouring the novels of George Sand, who confirmed him in his new conviction of the infinite superiority of the French over the German mind. How petty and pretentious seemed the vapourings of the once admired Bettina beside the "great, apostolic figure" of Madame Dudevant! Bettina belonged to the German world of abstract theory. George Sand had the French gift of "practical,

living, real simplicity". She was the prophetess of humanity; and every time Bakunin read her writings, he felt himself a better man, and his faith grew "stronger and broader".¹

The canton of Zürich, which, since an unsuccessful democratic rising in 1839, had been under a solid, conservative government, did not appreciate the honour of sheltering the revolutionary poet who had been expelled from Prussia and Saxony. About the middle of February Herwegh received notice to leave Zürich. He took refuge in the canton of Bâle, which conferred its citizenship on him; and on March 8th, 1843, his marriage with Emma Siegmund was celebrated in the fashionable little watering-place of Baden. Bakunin acted with gusto as best man and master of the ceremonies, handing the bride from her carriage into the church with the words "Adieu, Mademoiselle", and marshalling her out again with "Bonjour, Madame". Altogether, Bakunin seems to have derived an unexpected amount of sentimental satisfaction from Herwegh's love-match, and his letters are full of somewhat laboured compliments to the bride. But these events, followed by the departure of the bridal pair for Italy, brought to an end the ambitious dream of the *Deutsche Bote*. The material which had been collected—poems and essays by Herwegh and his friends—was published in a small volume. It included no contribution from the indolent Bakunin.²

During the same spring, Bakunin embarked on the most curious and obscure of his own sentimental experiments. He had met in Dresden an Italian singer named Pescantini and his wife Johanna, a Russian from the Baltic provinces. He had borrowed money from Pescantini and even "begged him to look after his financial affairs". The Pescantinis were well off, and they had recently bought a property on the shores of the Lake of Geneva near Nyon, where Bakunin was to join them during the summer. But their first meeting in Switzerland took place on St. Peter's Island in the Lake of Bienne, sacred to the memory of Rousseau, who had lived there for two months in 1765. Here Bakunin spent ten days with the Pescantinis and their children at the end of April 1843. It was a delicious interlude in his now lonely life.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 179-84, 186.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 196; Herwegh, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 40, 222.

A charming place and charming people [he wrote to Paul]. Putting aside for a while all my cares, I was happy as a boy, walked, sang, climbed rocks, admired nature, translated Schelling, read Italian, indulged my fancy and built castles in Spain.

The castles in Spain were built for Johanna. At Dresden, Bakunin had credited Pescantini with "a fine, generous Italian nature, very passionate, very intelligent, and altogether artistic". But the society of the high-souled Johanna now induced him to take a different view. Pescantini's "Italian nature" was, it appeared, unworthy of so perfect a wife; and Bakunin began to see himself as the knight-errant destined by heaven to deliver Johanna from the "terrible and infamous slavery" of her marriage. The rôle was familiar and congenial. Bakunin was once more the director of a woman's conscience, and once more the prophet of emancipation and domestic rebellion. It was the "liberation of Varvara" all over again in a more romantic setting.¹

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But romance was no longer enough to provide Bakunin, as of old, with an escape from reality. The return to Zürich from St. Peter's Island was a descent from the sublime to the sordid. Sentiment was driven out by finance. The reader must be prepared to assume that Bakunin's finances were at all times irretrievably encumbered and inextricably confused; for the biographer is no more competent than was Bakunin himself to unravel the tangled skein of his indebtedness. In one respect, indeed, his balance-sheets were simplicity itself. The credit side was always a blank. He divided his debts into two categories: those which threatened imprisonment, and those which threatened dishonour. The others he ignored and promptly forgot. It was, indeed, only at moments of exceptional crisis that he gave his creditors more than a passing thought. One of these moments confronted him on his return to Zürich at the beginning of May 1843.

His financial situation had been growing steadily more desperate since his flight from Dresden. His total assets when he settled in Zürich were two francs, and these he gave to a beggar in the street in order, as he explained to Herwegh, that he might

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 183, 199, 204, 209, 218, 245.

be entirely free from worldly cares. Even before the visit to St. Peter's Island, the tone of Ruge's letters from Dresden was becoming impatient and disagreeable. As a creditor, Ruge compared most unfavourably with Turgenev. Not being a rich man (the prohibition of the *Deutsche Jahrbücher* within a few days of Bakunin's departure deprived him of a regular, if modest, income), he expected prompt repayment of his own advances; and not being a Russian, he took a pedantic view of Bakunin's commercial debts in Dresden, which the debtor had airily asked him to liquidate. Altogether the sum due exceeded 2000 thalers. In March Bakunin took the bull by the horns and drew a bill on Turgenev's bankers in Petersburg for 2500 thalers which he sent to Ruge, explaining that the balance would come in handy for his current needs. Only the interference of the Russian censorship with his correspondence could, he declared, account for the persistent silence of his family in the face of his repeated appeals. No doubt Turgenev would pay, and settle with his father afterwards. If all else failed, he had "healthy legs and arms and a strong will", and would know how to escape beggary.

I confess with my whole heart [he ingenuously concluded] that I have hitherto been a disorderly person. But I know that I have now overcome my disorderliness. Economy has now for the first time presented itself to me as a fundamental condition of my personal dignity.¹

These protestations were soon forgotten in the rapturous atmosphere of St. Peter's Island. But at the beginning of May, Ruge was still clamouring to be paid; and another unpleasant letter awaited Bakunin on his return to Zürich, informing him that the bill drawn on Turgenev had not been honoured. Bakunin could find no other resource but a long and eloquent letter to Premukhino. It was addressed, in token of urgency, "To Paul or to Nicholas or, if they are not there, to my sisters", and it contained a detailed list of his debts, amounting in all to about 10,000 roubles. Two-thirds of them required immediate repayment, presumably falling within one of the two categories of "imprisonment" and "dishonour". Michael begged that his father should sell his share of the estate, that his aunt should mortgage her land, that money should be borrowed from

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 156, 196-8; Wagner, *My Life*, p. 466.

Turgenev or from Madame Yazikov—some desperate remedy was imperative if he were to be saved from bankruptcy. If his debts were paid, and he were given enough to live on for “one or two years”, he would never again ask them for a penny. He would give his creditors three-months bills, and if, in the interval, the money were not forthcoming, he would go gladly to prison in the honest conviction that he had done his best.¹

The consternation with which these appeals were received at Premukhino must be left to the imagination; for no record of it remains. But the thought of Michael “wandering about almost without bread” moved the soft-hearted Natalie Beyer to address a breathless exhortation to her friends:

Tell your parents the whole truth, tell them that one day they may perhaps wish to spend their whole fortune to redeem their son and it will be too late; and will they then be able to silence, to appease with their gold, the remorse, the awful knowledge that they have lost him, perhaps caused his death, through their own fault?

The moment was particularly unpropitious. The Bakunin family were passing through a time of financial stringency, and Turgenev was on bad terms with his mother, who held the purse-strings. Tatyana, lowering the pride which had once made her shrink from the thought of Michael's living at Turgenev's expense, wrote herself to Turgenev begging him to pay the 2000 thalers owing to Ruge. Turgenev, who had already been approached direct with the same request by Ruge, pulled a wry face. It was no novelty for him to pay for his loves. But it was distasteful to him to be asked for money by a woman whose love he had not even been able to return. He had just sent Michael 1000 roubles on his own account; and after some delay, he sent a further 1200 roubles. But he wrote to the unhappy Tatyana so acid a letter that she was stung to the quick; and this sordid financial episode finally terminated a relationship which had begun in the pure, exalted atmosphere of romance. Alexander Bakunin found 1800 roubles to save his eldest son from disgrace. Whether further sums were forthcoming—and, if so, from whom—is not recorded. But the crisis was momentarily surmounted. Ruge was pacified. The debtor did not go to

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 205-11.

prison, and was once more free to devote himself to matters of higher import.¹

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For neither sentiment nor finance could for long form the staple of Bakunin's life; and his thoughts were already turning to politics. He made the acquaintance, for the most part through Herwegh, of many leading Swiss radicals, including August Follen, who had been expelled twenty years before from Prussia and was now leader of the radical party of Zürich, and Julius Fröbel, an *émigré* of more recent date who published the *Schweizerische Republikaner*, the most important Swiss democratic paper. Follen, taking pity on Bakunin's financial plight, suggested that he should write a book about Russia. But Bakunin retained throughout life an aristocratic distaste for the indignity of making a living by the use of his pen; and he had at this time a prejudice, which he was soon to shed, against attacking in print the institutions of his own country. Except for an article on communism in the *Schweizerische Republikaner*, which is conjecturally attributed to him, nothing from his pen was published during his stay in Switzerland. Among his lesser acquaintances of this period was Agassiz, professor of natural history at Neuchâtel, who soon afterwards emigrated to the United States; and at Berne he met the well-known liberal professor of natural science, Vogt. Vogt's wife Luisa, who was a sister of Follen, took a lively maternal interest in the homeless and fascinating young Russian. Of their four sons, Karl, the eldest, is known in history for his part in the German revolution of 1848, and for his subsequent quarrel with Marx. The third, Adolf, now still a boy, was a faithful friend of Bakunin's last years; and the youngest, Gustav, crossed his path at the end of the 'sixties. Together with Adolf Reichel, the Vogts proved the most constant and durable of all Bakunin's friends.²

But the most important figure who crossed Bakunin's path during his sojourn in Switzerland was, like himself, a stranger to Switzerland and a wanderer on the face of the earth. When Bakunin reached Zürich at the beginning of 1843, one of the

¹ Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, pp. 224, 242-3, 248, 262; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 204.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 174-5, 193-4, 222-31.

first books to come into his hands was a slender volume entitled *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom*, by Wilhelm Weitling, which had been published at Vevey in the previous December. It struck him as a "really remarkable book". The author, he remarked, using a still unfamiliar word for the first time, "thought as a proletarian"; and he quoted to Ruge a striking passage from the book:

The perfect society has no government, but only an administration, no laws, but only obligations, no punishments, but means of correction.

The impression which this striking phrase made on Michael's mind was vivid and lasting. Here in embryo was the cardinal article of the anarchistic creed which he himself was to elaborate more than twenty years later.¹

Wilhelm Weitling was the illegitimate son of a German girl of Magdeburg by a French officer quartered there after the Napoleonic campaign of 1806. He learned the trade of a tailor, any other education he acquired being the result of his own persistence and application. When he grew up, he evaded military service, and left home with his pack on his back to make his way in the world. After some years of wandering he appeared in 1835 in Paris, where he studied the tenets of socialism and the practice of revolutionary propaganda. After the rising of 1839 he was expelled, together with Blanqui's other foreign accomplices, from France. He took refuge in Switzerland; and here he spent the next four years, wandering from place to place, founding secret political societies of craftsmen, and printing with his own hands books, journals, and broadsheets, in which he preached his vision of a future Utopia and of the social upheaval through which it would be attained.

It was in May 1843 that Weitling, with a letter of introduction from Herwegh, came to see Bakunin in Zürich. Bakunin gave the author of *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom* an enthusiastic welcome. He found in him shrewdness, intelligence, energy, and, "above all, plenty of undisciplined fanaticism, of honourable pride, and of faith in the liberation and in the future of the enslaved majority". Hitherto revolution had been, in Bakunin's experience, a topic to be discussed by intellectuals to the sociable

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 176-7.

accompaniment of tea and tobacco. It was impossible to imagine any provocation which would have induced Ruge to abandon the pen for the sword; and Herwegh, though he loved to pose as a man of action, was fundamentally more interested in writing poems against tyranny than in overthrowing it. In the person of Weitling, revolution assumed the more practical form of a burning personal grievance. His ultimate ideals were clothed in the quasi-mystical language peculiar to the French socialism of the day. But he had no illusions and no scruples about the method through which those ideals must be achieved. The tailor's apprentice from Magdeburg was unencumbered by any traditions of race, family, or social status. His hand was against every man; and he preached the overthrow of states and the expropriation of wealth by force. He appears to have been the first to propose to "shoot without mercy all enemies of communism". Bakunin found in this blend of high-souled idealism and reckless brutality something congenial to his own turbulent nature. The meeting with Weitling was one of the capital events of his life, completing his transformation from a speculative philosopher into a practical revolutionary. The Russian aristocrat became the servant of the international proletariat. From this time forward, the violent overthrow of the social and political order became the primary and avowed object of Michael Bakunin's career.¹

The extent of Bakunin's co-operation in Weitling's propaganda or participation in his societies of "craftsmen" remains obscure. The association was in any case brief. Weitling had just sent to the printer the manuscript of his new book *The Gospel of a Poor Sinner*, which depicted Jesus as the first rebel and communist, "the illegitimate child of a poor girl Mary"—in fact, as a prototype of Weitling himself. The authorities of Zürich, having got wind of the matter, decided to take advantage of this simultaneous offence against political and religious orthodoxy. The press was raided and the proofs of the book confiscated. Weitling was arrested and condemned to six months' imprisonment and to eventual expulsion from the country; and his papers were submitted to a commission presided over by a conservative jurist named Bluntschli, who was instructed to prepare a report on this new and insidious disease of communism.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 106.

These events had an important repercussion on Bakunin's fate. His name figured in some of Weitling's papers; and he was mentioned in Bluntschli's report (which was published) as one of Weitling's accomplices. The Swiss authorities took no action against him. But the watchful Russian Legation at Berne reported in detail to Petersburg on this young Russian of noble family who had mixed himself up with the communists. The authorities were properly concerned. In November 1843 Alexander Bakunin at Premukhino received a notice requesting him to give no further financial assistance to his son Michael and to bring him back forthwith to Russia. The old man replied, with all becoming humility, that he disapproved of his son's activities, and had sent him no money since May, but that he had no means of compelling him to return.

In the meanwhile Bakunin, ignorant of these proceedings, had spent the late summer and autumn with the Pescantinis at Nyon. Thence he moved to Berne, where Reichel came from Dresden to join him. He remained in Berne well into the New Year of 1844; and there, on February 6th, he was invited to the Russian Legation to receive an official summons to return home. Bakunin had a healthy respect for the long arm of the Russian Government. He made show of compliance, and left Berne the next day. But his destination was not Russia. He spent a few days at Baden waiting for his belongings to be sent on to him from Zürich. Then, accompanied by Reichel, he left Switzerland for Brussels.

Criminal proceedings *in contumaciam* were taken in Petersburg against the defaulter. The law took its slow course. In December 1844 the Tsar signed a decree condemning "ex-Ensign Michael Bakunin" to loss of his noble rank and to banishment to Siberia for an indefinite period with hard labour; and his property was declared confiscated to the State. The sentence of perpetual exile which he had pronounced on himself when he fled from Dresden was thus officially confirmed.¹

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 232, 448, 458-60; iv. 110.

CHAPTER 11

LIFE IN PARIS

THE first, and only important, event of Bakunin's three months' residence in Brussels was a short visit to Paris, at the invitation of a Russian friend, probably Alexandra's old suitor, Botkin. In the forties of last century, when Bakunin first set foot in the French capital, Paris was what London became in the next decade—the recognised asylum of political *émigrés* from every part of the Continent, and the rallying-point of advanced thought. Beneath the dull, dispiriting monotony of the July monarchy, the tradition of 1789 lived on. Malcontents of many nationalities and of every school—including more than 80,000 *émigrés* from Germany alone—were preaching their panaceas and predicting the downfall of the *bourgeois* state. Everyone interested in the theory or practice of revolution was bound sooner or later to come to Paris. It was the bugbear of the conservatives and the Mecca of the malcontents. It was the proper element of such a spirit as Michael Bakunin.

The few days which Bakunin spent in Paris in March 1844 were eventful and fascinating. He found there several familiar faces. Besides Botkin, who had quite recovered from his love for Alexandra, there was Grigori Tolstoy, whom Bakunin had first met in Dresden—one of those enlightened Russian aristocrats who liked, when travelling abroad, to profess liberal opinions, but who lived comfortably at home on their serf-earned revenues. The Herweghs, fresh from a prolonged honeymoon in Italy, had set up a smart establishment in Paris on the ample revenues which Emma received from her father. Lastly there was Ruge, who had migrated to Paris from Dresden. He had only half forgiven Bakunin his financial unpunctuality, and tartly observed that his Russian friend "had become so unused to German that he made mistake after mistake and could not find his words". When Bakunin appeared in Paris, Ruge had just issued the first number (it proved also to be the last) of a successor to the defunct *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, which he entitled

Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher. It contained an important article by Marx on Hegel's *Philosophy of Law* and a short contribution from Bakunin—a letter written from St. Peter's Island in the preceding May (but probably doctored for publication), in which he exhorted Ruge not to despair of the prospects of revolution and pointed to France as the hope of the future. Ruge, whose ambitions outran his capacities, saw himself in Paris as the leader of an international revolutionary movement. On March 23rd there was a solemn conclave for the discussion of "our affairs". Bakunin, together with Tolstoy and Botkin, represented revolutionary Russia. Among the Frenchmen were Louis Blanc, Pierre Leroux, and Félix Pyat. For the Germans, Ruge was supported by a journalist named Bernays and by Karl Marx. Bakunin must already have heard Marx's name from Ruge in Dresden. He now found himself for the first time face to face with his future antagonist.¹

A few days later Bakunin hurried back to the humdrum life of Brussels, where Reichel had found a post as a teacher at the Conservatorium. The only kindred spirits whom Bakunin found in Brussels were a few Polish *émigrés*, the chief of whom was Lelewel, the veteran democrat and historian. But the prospects of another Polish rebellion were far off; and the Belgian capital had no attraction for Bakunin. Having once discovered the hub of the revolutionary universe, he could be content with nothing else. In July 1844 he persuaded the malleable Reichel to migrate with him to Paris, which was his place of residence for the next three and a half years.²

He found his first resting-place among the group of German exiles who had been associated with the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*. Since the collapse of that ill-starred project, most of the contributors, including Marx and Ruge himself, had migrated to a less ambitious weekly news-sheet, the *Vorwärts*, edited by Bernays and another Jew named Bernstein. For a time Bakunin abandoned Reichel, and lodged in the Rue des Moulins with a brother of Bernstein, who was surprised to discover that the worldly possessions of this unconventional

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 555-6; Ruge, *Briefwechsel*, i. 318, 370; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 64, 211-15, 461.

² *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 555; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 110-11.

Russian aristocrat were limited to a single trunk, a folding bed, and a zinc wash-basin. If, however, Bakunin wrote for the *Vorwärts*, research has failed to identify his contributions; and he condescendingly dubbed it "a worthless sheet". Presently Bakunin was once more lodging with Reichel in the Rue de Bourgogne, where they took English and French lessons together. As usual, Bakunin must have subsisted in the main on the benefactions of his friends. No trace remains of the "translations from the German" which, according to his *Confession*, he undertook for a livelihood; and nothing more is heard of an alleged promise of "lessons in Russian families at 10 or 7½ francs each".¹

The German radicals soon introduced the new Russian recruit to their French colleagues; and Bakunin met in turn nearly every representative of what passed for advanced thought in Paris of the 'forties. He visited two of those whose writings, during recent years, had moved him most: Lamennais and George Sand. But George Sand was too masterful, and Lamennais too far removed from the business of everyday life, to be good company for Bakunin; and in neither case were close relations established. During his first brief stay in March he met Pierre Leroux, who, a few years earlier, had founded the *Revue Indépendante* in collaboration with George Sand. But Bakunin seems to have seen no more of Leroux, and his ambition to become a contributor to the paper was not realised. He called on Cabet, the veteran author of the famous *Voyage en Icarie* (who was soon himself to found an "Icarian" colony in the United States of America), and on Considérant, the leader of the Fourierists. But although the French communists appeared at first view "more progressive, and more humane, free, and dignified than the German", he was soon convinced of the hollowness of the illusion that a social revolution could be brought about by preaching sermons and writing books, or that an earthly paradise could be constructed on *a priori* lines in the seclusion of a professor's sanctum. These utopian dreamers had all Weitling's defects without his one transcendent merit. Bakunin found more to attract him in the liberal and radical journalists: Merrucan of the *Constitutionnel*, Marrast of the *National*, Émile

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 236-8; iv. 114; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 400-401; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, i. 127.

Girardin of *La Presse*, and above all Louis Blanc, Flocon, and Cavaignac of *La Réforme*. But his journalistic activities in Paris were limited to a couple of articles; and none of these men played any serious part in his development. In the early days he attended some socialist or communist meetings of French working-men. Fearing, however, that this might compromise him in the eyes of the French authorities and lead to his expulsion, he soon abandoned even this form of intervention in French political life. The French proletariat exercised as little influence on him at this period as the French *bourgeois* radicals.¹

One event of Bakunin's life in Paris, which he failed to record either in his *Confession* or elsewhere, finds its place here. In 1845 he became a Freemason, joining the Scottish Lodge of the Grand Orient of Paris. There was a long-established tradition of alliance between Masonry and advanced political thought. In early nineteenth-century Russia "the tiny sect of Masons", as Bakunin himself wrote, "preserved in secret the sacred flame of love for humanity"; and throughout the century most of the French radicals were Freemasons. There is therefore nothing surprising about Bakunin's association with Masonry. But Reichel, with whom he lived during the greater part of this time, remained unaware of it; and this fact, coupled with the absence of any reference to it in his correspondence of the period, suggests that his interest in it was never more than lukewarm. Detailed evidence is altogether lacking on this obscure point in his career.²

Amid the bevy of mere acquaintances, French and German, two men stand out, during the first part of Bakunin's stay in Paris, by reason both of their own intrinsic importance and of the rôle they were destined to play in his life: Karl Marx and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

How close were Bakunin's relations with Marx during the latter half of the year 1844 in Paris, it is difficult to discover.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 200, 235; iv. 113.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 25. A certificate in the Bakunin dossier in the Dresden Staatsarchiv, probably the one obtained by Skorzewski in 1848 (see p. 165), shows that Bakunin had been a member of the Scottish Lodge of the Grand Orient of Paris for three years. Reichel informed Nettlau (personal communication from Dr. Nettlau to the writer) that he was unaware that Bakunin was a Freemason.

Both belonged to the *Vorwärts* circle. Both were friends and admirers of Herwegh. Both despised Ruge, and about this time openly quarrelled with him. Both were busy denouncing the unpractical character of German thought; and both looked to the "Gallic cock" to give the signal of European revolution. But whatever the degree of their relationship, Marx was clearly the dominant partner. Marx was four years Bakunin's junior. But his record and experience were far more impressive. He had been for a year the editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung* at Cologne, and he had made it the most important and most aggressive radical organ in Germany. His reputation was established in philosophy and in political journalism; and he had just plunged into an intensive course of political economy. Many years afterwards, at the height of their quarrel, Bakunin paid a generous tribute to the profundity of his rival's erudition in the days when they first met in Paris. Rarely had he encountered anyone who had read "so widely and so intelligently" as Marx.

At that time I understood nothing of political economy, and my socialism was purely instinctive. He, though he was younger than I, was already an atheist, an instructed materialist, and a conscious socialist.

All these things Bakunin himself was one day to become; and it was perhaps under the influence of Marx that he projected, during the autumn of 1844, a work on the philosophy of Feuerbach (nothing further is heard of the project), began to study political economy (here, too, he never got very far), and declared himself (somewhat misleadingly) a "whole-hearted communist".

Bakunin's perfectly sincere admiration for Marx's talents did not, however, include any affection for his person. For Bakunin, Marx's nature always remained something alien and repellent. Marx was hard, meticulous, and calculating. He practised a scientific socialism professedly based on pure thought; and for Bakunin nothing was good which was not tinged with emotion. Between the Russian aristocrat and the Jewish lawyer's son there was not merely a clash of temperaments, but a lack of any common background of tradition and ideas; and from the outset they neither understood nor liked each other.

We met fairly often [wrote Bakunin afterwards of these Paris days] because I very much admired him for his knowledge and for his

passionate and earnest devotion to the cause of the proletariat, although it always had in it an admixture of personal vanity; and I eagerly sought his conversation, which was instructive and witty so long as it was not inspired by petty spite—which, unfortunately, happened very often. But there was never real intimacy between us. Our temperaments did not allow it. He called me a sentimental idealist; and he was right. I called him morose, vain, and treacherous; and I too was right.

But these fundamental divergences had for the present no time to find their full expression. In January 1845 some unduly frank articles in the *Vorwärts* induced the French authorities, at the request of the Prussian Government, to expel Marx; and he retired with his family to Brussels—"to my no small relief", as Bakunin recorded in the *Confession*.¹

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was a more congenial, and perhaps more important, influence at this stage of Bakunin's development. Proudhon was, like Weitling, a self-educated workingman. But unlike Weitling he led a life of model *bourgeois* respectability; and though his opinions were among the most radical ever propounded, he never took any part in the active promotion of revolution. His fearlessly original mind delivered him from the conventional Utopias which were the hobby and the bane of French socialism. The first important step in his career was the publication in 1840 of a pamphlet entitled *What is Property?*—the answer being the famous dictum, "Property is theft". The denial of property was followed by a no less emphatic rejection of God. He called himself, not an atheist, but an antitheist. He believed in God as the personification of Evil. "If there were no God", he argued, "there would be no property-owners." Political institutions were treated in the same spirit. Like Weitling, he had no faith in constitutional democracy. "I vote against the constitution", he declared in the Constituent Assembly of 1848, "not because it contains things of which I disapprove, and does not contain things of which I approve: I vote against the constitution because it is a constitution." The sweeping quality of these negations and the trenchant vigour of his style have won for Proudhon rather than Weitling the title of "the father of anarchism".

Bakunin's relationship to Marx was purely unilateral: Marx

¹ Sobranie, ed. Steklov, iii. 237; iv. 111.

took nothing from Bakunin. The relationship between Bakunin and Proudhon was more complex. Proudhon's opinions, like those of Bakunin, were in a perpetual state of flux; and like Bakunin he dealt more readily in negation than in affirmation. He knew no German; and Bakunin performed the immense service of introducing him to Hegel, who had not yet been translated into French. One evening, runs the famous story, Bakunin began to expound to his friend the revolutionary implications of the philosophy of Hegel. Next morning, when dawn broke, the exposition was still in progress over the embers of the dead fire. The Hegelian dialectic figured largely, though in a strangely distorted form, in a work called *Economic Contradictions* which Proudhon published in 1846; and the words "*Destruam et Aedificabo*", which he chose for its motto, are curiously reminiscent of Bakunin's "The passion for destruction is a creative passion". Yet despite these substantial obligations, Bakunin in later years always spoke of his debt to Proudhon, never of Proudhon's debt to him. Proudhon, he wrote many years later, was "a hundred times more of a revolutionary in his actions and in his instincts than the doctrinaire *bourgeois* socialists". Proudhon had blown sky-high the sentimental optimism and fantastic day-dreams of the Saint-Simonists and the Fourierists. He had boldly attacked the three main pillars of the existing order: God, the State, and private property. Weitling had struck the first blow. But it was Proudhon more than any other man who was responsible for transforming Bakunin's instinctive revolt against authority into a regular anarchistic creed. It was more than twenty years before that creed was finally formulated. But twenty years after their meeting, Bakunin still hailed Proudhon as his teacher and forerunner.¹

Bakunin's interests in Paris were, however, not exclusively confined to politics or political theory. The breach with Ruge and the departure of Marx brought to an end his association with the German political groups in Paris. The only Germans whose society he now frequented were the Herweghs. Herwegh, indolent and self-indulgent by nature, and now for the first

¹ Bakunin, *Œuvres*, ii. 311-12; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiv. 453.

time rich as well as famous, found more to interest him in the gay society of Paris than in the drab cause of social revolution or political reform. He became a man about town, and acquired a mistress of literary as well as social distinction in the person of the Comtesse d'Agoult. This mode of life earned him the contempt, not unmixed with envy, of Ruge and other good German democrats. But Bakunin had no prejudices against aristocrats; and he thought Ruge's objections to Herwegh's association with the Countess *bourgeois* and conventional. Michael could, if necessary, live on nothing. But he liked luxury when it offered; and years later, the worthy Reichel recalled with a sigh the "wonderful evenings" which they had spent together in the Herweghs' flat in the Rue Barbet. Bakunin even appeared from time to time among the celebrities who thronged the *salon* of the Comtesse d'Agoult, in order, as he apologetically remarked, "not altogether to lose the habit of French politeness and French mendacity".¹

These new friends could not, however, supply all the needs of Bakunin's heart. Five years of wandering had not weaned him from recurrent attacks of home-sickness.

I had condemned myself to exile in a foreign land, in a spiritual atmosphere that was cold, without kith and kin, without a family, without any sphere of activity, without occupation, and without any hope of a better future. I had torn myself away from my country, and light-heartedly barred every path for my return. But I did not succeed in becoming either a German or a Frenchman. On the contrary, the longer I lived abroad, the more deeply did I feel that I was a Russian and should never cease to be a Russian.

These words come from the *Confession* to the Tsar, and are not the whole truth about Bakunin's sentiments at this period. But they accurately depict one of his moods; and at such moments of depression he may really have felt a passing temptation to "throw himself into the Seine and drown there a joyless and unprofitable existence".²

From official Russia he had heard nothing since his failure to comply with the summons to return. But in January 1845, the Parisian *Gazette des Tribunaux* reprinted from the Russian

¹ Ruge, *Briefwechsel*, i. 374; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 372; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 269.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 114-15.

official gazette the Imperial sentence of banishment and hard labour. The same decree passed a similar sentence on another *émigré* in Paris, Ivan Golovin, an unpopular figure whom Bakunin afterwards described as "a high-class crook"; and when the *Gazette des Tribunaux* published a letter from Golovin protesting against the decree as a violation of "the charter granted by the Romanovs to the Russian nobility", this was too much for Bakunin. He sent to the radical paper *La Réforme* a long letter in which both Golovin and the Russian Government fell under his lash. He ridiculed the idea that the Russian nobility had any charter of rights which was valid against the will of the Tsar. "The law of Russia is nothing but the will of the Tsar", was his text; and his conclusion was the necessity of democracy for "unhappy and oppressed countries like Russia and Poland". He waxed eloquent over the qualities and destinies of the Russian people:

Despite the terrible slavery which crushes it, despite the blows which rain in on it from every side, the Russian people is in its instincts and habits altogether democratic. It is not corrupted, it is only unhappy. In its half-barbarian nature there is something so energetic, so broad, such an abundance of poetry, passion, and wit that it is impossible, if you are acquainted with it, not to be convinced that it has still a great mission to perform in the world. . . . For the Russian people is advancing despite the ill-will of the government. Partial, but very serious, risings of the peasants against their masters amply prove it. The moment is perhaps not distant when the risings will be merged in a great revolution; and if the government does not make haste to emancipate the people, much blood will be spilt.

This letter appeared in *La Réforme* on January 27th, 1845. It was the first occasion on which he had publicly attacked the Russian Government and proclaimed a Russian revolution; and he refers to the letter in the *Confession* as his "second crime"—the first having been his refusal to return to Russia. More significant still, it was the first occasion on which he publicly announced that sentimental belief in the essentially democratic character of the Russian people which was so conspicuous a feature of his later doctrine. It is important to note that this belief was born, not of observation on the spot, but of the emotion of home-sickness experienced in a foreign capital more than

four years after his last contact with the Russian people itself.¹

But home-sickness for Russia meant, first and foremost, home-sickness for Premukhino. There was nothing abstract about Bakunin's patriotism. It centred on a single spot which comprised for him the whole Russian world. Since July 1843, when his name had been publicly involved in the Weitling affair, no word had reached him from Premukhino. In the autumn of 1844 he recorded that he had found means of corresponding secretly with his family. But if he wrote at this time, his letters must have been either intercepted by the censorship, or destroyed, as a measure of precaution, by their recipients; for there is no trace of them in the Premukhino archives. Then, in the spring of 1845, there were three successive letters from Paris, the first to Paul, the second to Paul and Tatyana jointly, and the third to Tatyana. These letters were all given to safe friends returning to Russia for personal delivery. In the last Michael sends Tatyana a copy of his letter to *La Réforme* and begs her to break a silence of two years. He was ready to renounce his parents, his other brothers and sisters, everyone save Paul and herself. But he could not bear to feel that his lifelong sacred intimacy with Tatyana was "as much subject to the laws of time and space as all the rest". Once more, for the last time, he tried to recapture the old sense of nearness.

Dear Tatyana, perhaps I am mistaken, but it seems to me that your life is sad and burdensome, that your days are slipping away in deep and silent grief, that your passionate heart, tortured by its unsatisfied need of love and life, has closed upon itself, and is suffering without end in its proud and inaccessible loneliness. It seems to me that you are left alone on the ruins of our old world of Premukhino, of our youthful beliefs and expectations, now rejected and forgotten by the rest, and that you have nobody near you, no friend with whom you would or could share your sorrow. Dear, if my guesses are right, remember that you still have one faithful, unchangeable friend. . . .

But Tatyana could not, or did not, answer. Michael did not write again; and his memories were the only link which still bound him to the home of his youth.²

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 234-43; iv. 112; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 41.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 243-57.

The many Russian visitors to Paris still brought him from time to time a faint flavour of his native land. In the company of Grigori Tolstoy, during his first winter in Paris, he "warmed his petrified soul, and regained strength and courage, and grew young once more". Among later arrivals was Ogarev, who had been deserted by his wife and was wandering from place to place in vain search of distraction and consolation. Except that Bakunin visited him in Paris, there is no record of what passed between them. But they buried the hatchet, and they met again seventeen years later as close friends. Then there were the Melgunovs, "excellent people and my *sincere* friends", who took back with them to Russia the letter for Tatyana. In the spring of 1845 (if an obscure allusion in Michael's letter to Paul may be trusted) Johanna Pescantini was in Paris, apparently alone; and Michael continued to pursue the struggle for her liberation which had begun on St. Peter's Island and on the shore of Lake Lemán. But the *dénouement* of Varvara's tragedy was reproduced with singular fidelity. Johanna was a profoundly religious woman. Bakunin's passionate incitements to revolt against the servitude of marriage conflicted with her sense of duty to husband and children; and it was the latter which prevailed. She loved Bakunin. But she returned to Pescantini. It was not easy for him to leave her, Bakunin wrote afterwards, but he had done so because she wished it; and after this time they did not meet again. Johanna seems to have been the one woman, other than his sisters, by whom Bakunin's feelings in his early manhood were deeply stirred. It is significant that they expressed themselves in a passionate call to strife and rebellion.¹

Another sentimental relationship of this period conforms to another pattern familiar in Bakunin's life—the pattern of his ill-starred philanderings with the Beyer sisters and with Mathilda Reichel. Among the Russian *émigrés* in Paris was Nicholas Sazonov, who had once belonged to the circle of Herzen and Ogarev in Moscow. He was lazy and self-indulgent by nature; and exiled from his native country, he drifted easily into the society of those numerous Russians who came to Paris, as Bakunin put it, "to drink French wine and kiss French women". These pursuits dissipated his considerable intelligence and still more considerable wealth. In the autumn of 1846 he

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 244-5, 256; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiv. 556.

found himself in Clichy prison for debt; and two of his sisters hurried from Russia to rescue him from his plight.

The sisters arrived too late for the purpose. Sazonov had already extricated himself from Clichy. But they found him in the more insidious clutches of an Italian mistress. They turned in despair to his friends—Bakunin among them. It seems improbable that Bakunin was qualified to offer any advice or assistance in this delicate situation. But Maria, the elder of the sisters, the widow of a certain Poludensky, quickly succumbed to an infatuation for the handsome young giant with whom she had to discuss her brother's predicament. The friendship lasted some two years; and several of her letters to Bakunin have been preserved. Bakunin accepted her ministrations with kindly tolerance, and could not, of course, resist the temptation to borrow money from her. There was no trace on his side of the passion which Johanna Pescantini had inspired in him. But externally both affairs ran much the same course; and it is uncertain which of them suggested a well-known passage in Turgenev's *Rudin*—a novel whose hero was admittedly drawn from Bakunin:

Abroad a certain lady, a Russian, fastened herself on him, some sort of blue-stocking, no longer young and not beautiful, as becomes a blue-stocking. For some time he carried on with her, and in the end he threw her over—or no, she threw him over.¹

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In 1847, the last year of Michael's stay in Paris, three more ghosts from the past crossed his path.

In the spring, Alexander Herzen arrived in Paris with his wife and three children—permanent exiles, though they did not yet know it, from the land of their birth. Within a week Herzen encountered Bakunin at the corner of a street, walking with three friends, talking and gesticulating, and stopping every few yards to make a point, just as he had done in Moscow ten years before. Outwardly, Bakunin had changed scarcely at all since Herzen bade him farewell, in that far-off summer of 1840, on the quays of Petersburg. Spiritually, there had been an enormous development. Since his departure from Russia, Bakunin

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiii. 587-8; xiv. 134-7; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 38-41; Turgenev, *Rudin*.

had not merely achieved a revolutionary interpretation of Hegel, but had passed far beyond it. He had enjoyed a privilege of which Herzen himself had hitherto only dreamed—three years' residence in the revolutionary capital of Europe. Herzen could now greet him as a pioneer on the road on which he himself was just beginning to travel. He was still in a state of mind when to talk to Proudhon in Bakunin's lodgings, or to meet Louis Blanc in a café, seemed in itself a milestone in his political progress.

Further reflexion and experience modified this simple picture. Herzen discovered that Bakunin, in the course of his long sojourn abroad, had lost his sense of current Russian realities. Already in the Jules Elysard article in the *Deutsche Jahrbücher* Bakunin had declared his belief that "the clouds were gathering" over his native land; and Herzen could not now convince his optimistic temperament that not a breath of revolution was stirring, or was likely to stir, in the Russia of Nicholas I. Herzen at this time (though after a few years abroad he, too, was overtaken by the same illusion) was still too close to Russia to share Bakunin's mystical view of the democratic nature of the Russian people. Nor was he much impressed by what he saw of the activities of Bakunin, Sazonov, and his other friends in Paris. The Bohemian life, the cramped students' lodgings, the chronic financial embarrassments and expedients, the discussions in cafés lasting until three o'clock in the morning, discussions where, as Herzen sarcastically remarked, "five men listened and did not understand, and five others did not understand and talked"—these things had become second nature to Bakunin, and had, in his outlook on the world, become inextricably interwoven with the cause of world revolution. Herzen's orderly, well-disciplined mind failed to perceive the connexion. Bakunin, and the Paris of 1847, provided ample food for his innate scepticism.¹

A few weeks after Herzen's arrival, Belinsky appeared in Paris—in quest not, like Herzen, of political enlightenment, but of health. It was Belinsky's first and last visit to Western Europe. He was in an advanced state of consumption, and spent the latter part of his stay in Paris in a doctor's establishment at Passy. The fire was almost out. There was no renewal of

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiii. 289, 579-80, 582.

those fierce resentments and conscience-stricken reconciliations which had marked the course of his earlier relations with Bakunin. Belinsky too had freed himself from the spell of Hegelian reality, and had turned, like Bakunin, from Hegel to the French socialists. But temperamentally the divergence was unbridged. Belinsky still referred gently to Bakunin as "our German" and "my believing friend".

He was born, and he will die, a mystic, an idealist, a romantic [wrote Belinsky on leaving Paris]; for to renounce philosophy does not change one's nature.

Bakunin's visionary optimism turned Belinsky into a cynic. Despotism and unrighteousness would triumph, "whatever my believing friend Bakunin may say".¹

The third ghost was Turgenev, who came to Paris towards the end of the summer, fresh from a tour of the German spas and a visit to London. But Turgenev's thoughts were now far from both philosophy and politics. After a short reign in Berlin, Bakunin had been quickly and finally deposed from any place in his heart; and the recollection of Tatyana may have added a further shade of embarrassment to the meeting. There was no attempt on either side to revive past intimacy. Since 1844 Pauline Viardot had held undisputed sway over Turgenev's malleable heart. A few days after his arrival in Paris, he slipped away to the Viardot villa at Courtavenel, and his friends in the city saw him no more.²

In September Belinsky left Paris to return to Russia. It was his farewell to many friends who had counted in his life—to Herzen, to Turgenev, to Bakunin; and in less than a year he was dead. In October Herzen, having entertained all his friends, including Bakunin and Herwegh, to a farewell banquet, left with his family for Italy. Two months later, Bakunin's own stay in Paris came to an end.³

¹ Belinsky, *Pisma*, iii. 249, 265, 328, 338-9.

² Belinsky, *Pisma*, iii. 258.

³ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 268.

CHAPTER 12

PRELUDE TO REVOLUTION

LIBERTY, in the eyes of nineteenth-century liberals bred in the tradition of the French Revolution, meant liberty not only for the individual but for the nation. Nations, like individuals, had the "right" not to be governed against their will by absolute monarchs or foreigners. In the age of Metternich, the principle of nationalism was everywhere regarded, both by its advocates and by its adversaries, as the natural corollary of democracy; and though, as the century wore on, both Karl Marx and Bismarck (the one in theory, the other in practice) clearly demonstrated that there was no necessary connexion between them, the conception of democracy and nationalism as allied forces making for political righteousness dominated the world far into the twentieth century, to be finally dissolved only in our own day by Mussolini and Hitler.

Throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century the cause of Poland served European liberals as the model example of these twin principles. It represented both the essence of nationalism and the essence of democracy. The oppressors of Poland were the three traditional opponents, since the Congress of Vienna, of democracy and nationalism: Austria, Russia, and Prussia. France and Great Britain, who ruled over no subject races in Europe, were free to indulge the liberal sentiments which they professed by sympathising with the subject Poles. Democrats of all countries joined in fierce denunciation of Austrian, Russian, and Prussian autocracy; and there was no better platform for such denunciation than the wrongs of Poland. Poland was notoriously the Achilles' heel of two out of the three partitioning Powers. In the hands of the nineteenth-century democrats the cause of Poland became a symbol of international righteousness.

It was inevitable that Michael Bakunin, the most extreme of all nineteenth-century champions of liberty, should sooner or later add the cult of nationalism to the cult of democracy; and it

was natural that his cult should find in Poland its first concrete object. But this development was slow to mature. Posted in his youth on the Polish frontier, Bakunin had been content to share the official attitude of contemptuous condescension towards these troublesome and semi-alien subjects of the Tsar. Later, he had not sought the society of the numerous Polish refugees in Berlin and Dresden; and even Lelewel in Brussels had impressed him as a personality rather than a Pole. But Lelewel had at least taught him that Poland was a country with a history of her own, not merely a refractory Russian province. Poland was, like Russia herself, a shining example of Tsarist oppression; and this conception took so firm a root in Bakunin's mind that, in his letter to *La Réforme* of January 1845 quoted in the preceding chapter, he referred to Russia and Poland side by side as "unhappy and oppressed countries" whose only salvation lay in "democracy".¹

The Poles, long immersed in the contemplation of their wrongs, were almost morbidly sensitive to foreign appreciation. In particular, the most casual word of sympathy from a Russian was a striking novelty. Count Adam Czartoryski, the leader of the aristocratic fraction of the Polish *émigrés*, sent one of his henchmen to invite Bakunin to visit his house. Bakunin went, was not impressed, and did not go again. A few weeks later he received a letter from a Pole of the democratic party named Stolzmann living in Somers Town, London. Stolzmann informed him that his letter to *La Réforme*, which "bore witness to his frank and loyal character and enlightened and progressive views", had been reprinted in a Polish *émigré* journal; and he invited him to attend a celebration in honour of the martyrs of the Decembrist insurrection, which was to be held in London in the following November. Bakunin replied politely, but did not go to London. He visited Adam Mickiewicz, the exiled Polish poet who was living in Paris. But the now ageing Mickiewicz was deeply infected by that strange outcrop of Polish romanticism—the Messianic doctrine that the martyrdom of Poland was a symbol of the Crucifixion, and that her resurrection would herald the salvation of mankind. He assured Bakunin that the world could be saved by a community consisting of one Pole, one Czech, one Frenchman, one Jew, and one Russian living and

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 242.

working in concord. Every ingredient was already available, except the Russian; and Mickiewicz looked to Bakunin to fill the void. This invitation, too, Bakunin politely declined.¹

His lukewarm attitude towards Polish aspirations was, however, soon disturbed by events in a small corner of Central Europe of whose existence he had hitherto been scarcely aware. The one tiny fragment of Polish soil which still preserved a nominal independence was the republic of Cracow. Here, in February 1846, the Polish standard was once more raised, and the liberation of Prussian and Austrian Poland proclaimed. The insurrection in Prussia fizzled out almost without a blow. In Galicia there was bitter fighting, during which the peasants rose against their landlords and thereby sealed the fate of the rebellion. When order was restored, Austria quietly annexed the free republic of Cracow with the connivance of Russia and Prussia, and in the teeth of mild diplomatic protests from Great Britain and France.

These events created extraordinary excitement in Paris, where the Poles were numerous and had powerful friends. For two or three days the course of the insurrection seemed to encourage the optimists; and the French radicals were particularly moved by the prospect of an approaching vindication of democracy and nationalism. Bakunin caught the excitement from his radical friends. It was the first time since he reached manhood that revolution was actually afoot in Europe—revolution, not in theory, but in action. He was irresistibly drawn towards it. The call of revolution was in his blood, as some men feel the call of sea or hills. But before his feelings could be translated into action, the insurrection had collapsed; and Bakunin's one contribution was an angry article in the *Constitutionnel*—his second and last journalistic venture in Paris—in defence of Poland and in denunciation of Tsarist oppression. If O'Connell, he wrote, could declare in the English Parliament that no nation on earth had been so cruelly treated as the Irish, that could only be because he knew nothing of the barbarities practised by the Russian Government in Poland.²

This time Bakunin had been too deeply stirred by the wrongs of Poland to relapse into apathy. He sought out the Polish

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 112-13; Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, pp. 300-304.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 257-61; iv. 117.

democratic organisation, whose headquarters were at Versailles, and offered his services for the promotion of anti-Tsarist activity in Poland and the border provinces. The objects of his policy were a Russian revolution and a republican federation of free Slav peoples. The conversations continued for some time. But the offer and the programme were not received with that spontaneous enthusiasm which Bakunin anticipated; and he found the Poles "narrow-minded, limited, and exclusive". It was difficult for Poles to trust a Russian; and even the Polish democrats, who belonged for the most part to the class of small landowners, were unlikely to relish Bakunin's revolutionary programme. Perhaps, too, the cloven heel of finance helped to mar the harmony of the discussions. While Bakunin could supply courage, energy, and a wealth of ideas, the working capital of any enterprise on which he engaged had to come from other sources. But if, as he wrote in the *Confession*, mutual confidence and practical co-operation were absent, his interest in the Polish cause did not abate. The names of a sister of Mieroslawski, the Polish General who had led the revolt of 1846 in Prussia, and of other Poles implicated in the rebellion, occur in his correspondence. A secret French police report of February 1847, noted that Bakunin "received in his lodgings a considerable number of Polish *émigrés*"; and a few months later he himself wrote to Luisa Vogt that he "lived almost exclusively with Poles, and had thrown himself heart and soul into the Russian-Polish movement". But for the moment nothing was on foot. For eighteen months after the article in the *Constitutionnel*, Bakunin returned perforce to the old life of study, talk, and sitting in Paris cafés.¹

But the event which sealed Bakunin's political destiny, and kept his name for the next sixteen years publicly and conspicuously associated with rebellion in Poland, was now at hand. In November 1847, just a month after Herzen's departure for Italy, two young Polish *émigrés* invited Bakunin to attend a banquet on the occasion of the anniversary of the Polish insurrection of 1831, which was to be presided over by a French radical deputy, Vavin. When the invitation reached him he was convalescent from an illness, "sitting at home with a shaved head". He

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 263, 267; iv. 118-19; Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, p. 127.

seized the opportunity with the eagerness of one casting behind him a long period of enforced idleness. He ordered a wig, took three days to prepare his speech, and delivered it at the banquet in a white heat of enthusiasm which communicated itself to every member of his audience. The solidarity of Russian democracy and Polish nationalism was his theme. In the name of the "real Russian nation", he offered Poland an alliance. "Because you are the enemies of the Emperor Nicholas, the enemies of official Russia, you are naturally, whether you wish it or not, friends of the Russian people." He tickled Slav patriotism by referring to the Tsar's German origin, and declared that Russia as well as Poland was serving a foreign master. In his peroration he held out a hand to all the enslaved Slav peoples:

While we remained apart, we mutually paralysed one another. None can stand against us if we act together. The reconciliation of Russia and Poland is a great cause and worthy of our whole-hearted devotion. It means the liberation of sixty million souls, the liberation of all the Slav peoples who groan under a foreign yoke. It means, in a word, the fall, the irretrievable fall, of despotism in Europe.¹

The personality of Bakunin is one of those phenomena which cannot be explained in rational terms. His ambitions were ill-defined and chimerical. His writings, though vigorous, were incoherent; and, both in his writings and his actions, he seldom finished what he had begun. His chequered career was void of any concrete attainment. Yet he produced on his contemporaries an impression of overwhelming vitality and power. His influence far transcended any measurable achievement which can be attributed to him; and he became a legend, even before his death, in several countries besides his own. Had Bakunin grown up in a State where political oratory was a living tradition, he might have been one of the foremost orators of all time. His life was spent in conditions where he could speak in public only on the rarest occasions, and never in his own tongue. But on those rare occasions, his massive form and fiery earnestness placed his listeners under an almost hypnotic spell. His speech at the Polish banquet was the first and most striking exhibition of his power as an orator. The frantic applause of the audience

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 270-79; iv. 118-19.

of 1500 Polish and French enthusiasts reached the indignant ears of Count Kiselev, the Russian Ambassador in Paris. Kiselev protested to Guizot against this abuse of French hospitality by political refugees for the conduct of propaganda against a friendly government. He demanded the dissolution of the Polish organisations and the expulsion of the offenders from France. The Poles enjoyed enough influential sympathy in Paris to make a government which depended on popular support reluctant to touch them. But a Russian had no friends. Bakunin's speech had been the sensation of the banquet of November 29th. Some gesture was necessary to appease the wrath of the Russian Government. On December 14th, 1847, Bakunin was served with an order to leave French territory. A request to Duchâtel, the Minister of the Interior, to inform him of the motives for his expulsion was ignored; and the fugitive returned to Brussels, whence he had come three and a half years before.¹

It was about the time of this expulsion that a strange rumour began to circulate surreptitiously in radical circles in Paris. It was passed from mouth to mouth that Bakunin was a secret agent of the Russian Government, and had wormed himself into the confidence of Poles and socialists only to betray them to his employers. The Poles themselves told Bakunin that the Russian Ambassador, Kiselev, had first started the rumour in order to discredit him, and had described him to Guizot, in demanding his expulsion, as an agent who "had gone too far". This hypothesis is certainly untrue; for the rumour is already referred to in the police report of February 1847, months before Kiselev took a hand in Bakunin's affairs. The source of the slander is probably to be sought in those Polish circles which had from the outset looked on Bakunin with distrust. Whoever was its first begetter, it circulated rapidly and widely. It possessed, when it was first uttered, a certain degree of verisimilitude. A member of the Russian landowning class who preached red revolution was a phenomenon too bewildering to be readily taken at its face value; and another Russian named Jacob Tolstoy, who had courted radical circles in Paris, had just been exposed as a police agent. Bakunin was frankly difficult to explain. He had no defined occupation and no visible means of subsistence. His

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 281, 291; iv. 119-20.

ill-regulated habits, while they should have convinced a logical mind of his unfitness for the exacting avocation of a spy, were precisely such as might arouse the suspicions of the unreflecting. Once launched, the slander was extraordinarily persistent. It was often scotched, but never killed; and it reappeared intermittently, and more and more incongruously, at many later stages of Bakunin's revolutionary career.¹

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Bakunin's second stay in Brussels was even shorter than the first. It lasted from the middle of December 1847 to the end of February 1848. Lelewel and the Polish democrats gave him the enthusiastic reception he deserved. But Lelewel had visibly aged since Bakunin had first met him nearly four years before. He was now "a broken man, a complete cypher in politics"; and worse still, he had taken as his constant companion a certain Lubliner, "a Jew who poses as a Pole" (this is the first recorded manifestation of the strong streak of anti-Semitism in Bakunin's make-up), "a most repulsive, most unbearable, most boring creature". The rank and file of Polish democrats in Brussels he found "rather unsympathetic". They had carried to a high stage of development "that petty animosity and scandalmongering which is the common disease of all *émigrés* and particularly of Poles"; and the murmurs of suspicion quickly followed him from Paris. In such conditions there could be no more than a pretence of confidence and co-operation. Bakunin's only public appearance in Brussels was at a banquet organised by the Poles in honour of the anniversary of the Decembrist insurrection (though it took place, after several postponements, only on February 14th). Here he delivered a speech which was, according to the account afterwards given in the *Confession*, "a development and continuation of the first". He spoke of "the great place of the Slavs and their mission to regenerate the decadent Western world", and predicted the near approach of European revolution and "the inevitable destruction of the Austrian Empire". There is no means of checking this somewhat dubious account. The speech was not printed, and has not survived.²

Bakunin found another old acquaintance in Brussels. Karl

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 119-20; Pfitzner, *Bakunistudien*, p. 27.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 282-4, 287; iv. 119-20.

Marx had lived there since his expulsion from Paris at the beginning of 1845. Under his inspiration and guidance, Brussels bade fair to become the headquarters of the international communist movement. It possessed not only a German Workers' Union, but a looser Democratic Federation designed to unite men of advanced views of whatever nationality. The president of the latter was a Belgian named Jottrand, whom Bakunin thought "active, strong, and really practical"; and Marx and Lelewel were vice-presidents. But Bakunin took no great interest in Marx's proceedings. He knew that Marx had just been negotiating with the English Chartists in London. But he nowhere mentions the *Communist Manifesto*, which was being drafted at this time, and was published in London a few weeks later. It is on record that he attended a meeting of the Democratic Federation on December 26th, and was admitted to membership together with D'Ester, a German from Cologne. He attended one further meeting—perhaps the one on January 9th at which Marx read a paper in French on Free Trade. But there his participation ended. Bakunin seems, during his stay in Brussels, to have been particularly intolerant of his fellow-workers in the cause of revolution. He conceived a deep, instinctive antipathy for the German group.

The Germans [he wrote to Herwegh], those craftsmen Bornstedt, Marx, and Engels—especially Marx—are plotting their usual mischief here. Vanity, malice, squabbles, theoretical intolerance and practical cowardice, endless theorising about life, activity, and simplicity, and in practice a total absence of life, action, or simplicity. . . . The single word *bourgeois* has become an epithet which they repeat *ad nauseam*, though they themselves are ingrained *bourgeois* from head to foot. In a word, lies and stupidity, stupidity and lies. In such company you cannot breathe freely.

Elsewhere he wrote more succinctly that the Democratic Federation was "the greatest humbug imaginable—a place for empty dissertations devoid of any live, practical meaning", and that Marx was "ruining the workers by making theorists of them". The fundamental, temperamental antithesis between Karl Marx and Michael Bakunin, between the man of study and theory and the man of impulse and action, was thus early defined by Bakunin himself.¹

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 282, 284, 287; iv. 120; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, vi. 435, 679; *Karl Marx, Chronik Seines Lebens* (Moscow, 1934), p. 43.

The only place where Bakunin felt thoroughly at home in Brussels was in society of another kind. Of all the Poles whom he encountered there, the most congenial proved to be a General Skrzyniecki, a member of the extreme Right wing of the Polish emigration. "Apart from his Catholic and even Jesuit opinions, and apart from his theory of divine right", the General, as Bakunin wrote apologetically to one of his Polish friends in Paris, displayed "genuine Polish and Slav feeling". It was a curious illustration of the undisciplined impulsiveness of Bakunin's friendships, and of the fact that a common social origin and tradition forms a stronger bond than a common political faith. Skrzyniecki introduced Bakunin to the conservative and clerical society of the Belgian capital, the Comte de Mérode, a former minister who had played a part in the establishment of Belgian independence, and the Comte de Montalembert, the French legitimist—men who would have been regarded as reactionaries even in the France of Louis-Philippe.

I lived [he wrote afterwards of this time] in the very centre of Jesuit propaganda. They tried to convert me to the Catholic faith; and as ladies as well as Jesuits exercised themselves over the salvation of my soul, I had a fairly lively time in their company.

Nor was Bakunin left entirely to the ministrations of pious Catholics. Maria Poludensky also appeared from Paris to make her contribution, spiritual and financial, to his welfare. The solicitude of female admirers once more afforded him a passing solace for his political disappointments.¹

But nothing could reconcile Bakunin, fresh from Paris, to the "narrow and isolated life" of Brussels. At one moment, inspired perhaps by what Marx and Engels told him of the English Chartists, he spoke of going to London. But his thoughts were never far from Paris. On February 4th, 1848, his expulsion gave rise to a strongly supported interpellation in the Chamber of Deputies, to which Guizot and Duchâtel returned lame and conflicting replies. Three days later, he wrote for publication in *La Réforme* an open letter of protest to Duchâtel, in the concluding sentence of which he declared that "time would judge between them". When this letter appeared on February 10th, even Bakunin could scarcely have expected that the sentence

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 287; iv. 120; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 38.

would be delivered in less than a fortnight. On February 22nd, 1848, the prohibition by the government of a series of radical banquets (at this period the consecrated form of political demonstration) led to some mild rioting in Paris. On the following day, the first shots were exchanged. Barricades were erected in the working-class quarters of Paris; and Louis-Philippe tried to stem the tide by dismissing the Guizot ministry. This surrender whetted instead of appeasing the popular appetite. On February 24th the revolution was in full swing. Louis-Philippe abdicated and fled, despised and almost unnoticed. The insurgents entered the Tuileries, and proclaimed a provisional government of all the talents, ranging from Louis Blanc the socialist to Lamartine the poet.

The effect on Bakunin of these stirring events was instantaneous and magnetic. He had done with the tranquil stagnation of the little Belgian capital. He told Maria Poludensky, on whom he called to bid her a hasty farewell, that he was literally ill with excitement. He waited only long enough to borrow a false passport for use in case of emergency, and started on his journey. The news of the proclamation of the republic greeted him on the frontier. The railway had been cut by the insurgents, and he walked into Valenciennes, the nearest French town. There were red flags in the streets and on the public buildings, and everyone was cheering. Bakunin boarded a train and reached Paris on February 26th. The chance for action had come at last.¹

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 120-21; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 38.

CHAPTER 13

1848

HERZEN (who was not, however, there to see) declares that the first days of the February revolution were the happiest of Bakunin's life. Revolution was his element. He had dedicated himself to it; and for the first time he met it face to face. Life had acquired a purpose. Bakunin noted with satisfaction that the dandies young and old in their fashionable carriages, the idlers with cane and lorgnette who were an essential part of the Paris he knew, had disappeared from the boulevards. Instead, there were the barricades of stones and broken furniture piled up as high as the house-tops, and red flags and revolutionary songs and an atmosphere of universal enthusiasm and good-will. Bakunin was far from the disillusioned realism which made him admit, in the evening of his days, that revolution, seen at close quarters, was an ugly business. Now everything was young and glorious, full of hope and of belief in the dignity and virtue of free humanity. The French proletariat, whom he had scarcely noticed before, became "my noble working-men".

Caussidière, the revolutionary Prefect of Police, was organising a new National Guard of workers. They were quartered in a barracks near the Luxembourg; and here Bakunin lodged for a whole week, sharing the life of the men from morning to night. He was enchanted with everything he saw and heard. Never had he found anywhere "such noble self-sacrifice, such a touching sense of honour, so much natural delicacy of behaviour, so much friendly gaiety, combined with so much heroism, as among these simple uneducated people". Bakunin himself was on his feet from four or five o'clock one morning till two o'clock the next; and life was one constant round of "assemblies, meetings, clubs, processions, marches, and demonstrations". He preached destruction so long as there was anything left to destroy. He preached rebellion—even when there was nothing left to rebel against. He was less interested in the constructive work of building up the new order. Two aphorisms attributed to

members of the provisional government have passed into the Bakunin legend. "What a man!" exclaimed Caussidière. "On the first day of a revolution, he is a perfect treasure; on the second, he ought to be shot." "If there were three hundred Bakunins", said Flocon, "it would be impossible to govern France."¹

In the spiritual intoxication of these delirious weeks Bakunin had little time or thought for old friends or enemies. Of the Russians, only Turgenev and Annenkov were still in Paris; and both were far too frightened of compromising themselves in the revolution to welcome much of Bakunin's company. Turgenev was afterwards able to assure the Russian authorities that during this time he "did not once visit Bakunin, and saw him only once in the street". Herwegh, impelled by his wife's ambition to justify his reputation as a revolutionary leader, was organising a German legion in Paris to carry the torch of revolution into his native land. Marx, who had been ignominiously expelled from Brussels by the police, arrived in time to establish in Paris the headquarters of the Communist League and to express his withering scorn of Herwegh's enterprise. Bakunin thought Marx's attitude to Herwegh grudging and ungenerous, and turned his back on him. It was no time for petty squabbles. Everyone who was doing something for the revolution ought to be encouraged.²

But before long Bakunin had discovered that his place was not in Paris; for Paris was no longer the only centre of revolution.

Soon, perhaps in less than a year [he wrote in *La Réforme* on March 13th], the monstrous Austrian Empire will be destroyed. The liberated Italians will proclaim an Italian republic. The Germans, united into a single great nation, will proclaim a German republic. The Polish democrats after seventeen years in exile will return to their homes. The revolutionary movement will stop only when Europe, the whole of Europe, *not excluding Russia*, is turned into a federal democratic republic.

The bold prophecy seemed on the verge of fulfilment. On the very day on which the article appeared, the Viennese rose

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiv. 424; Bauler, *Byloe* (July 1907), p. 75; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 121-2; Tuchkova-Ogareva, *Vospominaniya*, p. 304.

² Lemke, *Ocherki*, p. 162; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 296; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, i. 188-9.

against the government of Metternich, set up a Committee of Public Safety, and gave the signal of revolt to the diverse nationalities of the old Empire. On March 17th a constitutional ministry, responsible to the Hungarian Diet, was set up in Hungary. Venice declared herself a republic, a successful insurrection broke out against the Austrian garrison in Milan, and all Italy seemed on the point of uniting to expel her alien rulers. On March 18th Berlin took up the cry and extorted from the terrified Friedrich Wilhelm the promise of a constitution. Similar events occurred in most of the smaller German states. There seems no limit to the tide of revolution which the French example had set in motion.

We were in such a state of mind [wrote Bakunin later of these glorious days] that if somebody had come and told us "God has been turned out of heaven and a republic proclaimed there", everyone would have believed it and nobody would have been surprised.¹

It might well have seemed bitter to Bakunin, who still felt as a Russian, that Russia was the only important country on the continent of Europe where not a breath was stirring. But Bakunin's ardour was not damped. Here was a task worthy of his mettle. If there was no revolution in Russia, it was for him to make one. The starting-point of the Russian revolution must obviously be in Poland. The Polish leaders, Czartoryski among them, had already left Paris for Eastern Europe; and a Polish National Committee had been set up in Posen with the tacit consent of the Prussian authorities. Nothing detained Bakunin in Paris, where the revolution was slowly losing its glamour and settling down into a dull routine. He would start at once for Posen. The usual sordid obstacle confronted him: lack of money. But he had never been daunted by such trifles. He applied to the provisional government for a loan of 2000 francs for revolutionary work in Posen. Young governments are commonly generous. Flocon granted Bakunin's request with alacrity; and malicious people whispered that he was getting rid of an embarrassing supporter at a cheap price. Bakunin records that Flocon offered him a much larger sum, which he refused. It may be true. Bakunin too was generous, and took no thought for the morrow.²

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 265, 296; iv. 122-3.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 124-5.

The obliging Caussidière provided him with two passports, one in his own name, the other in that of an imaginary Pole from the Grand-Duchy of Posen, Léonard Neglinski; and thus armed with 2000 francs and two separate identities, Bakunin left Paris on the last day of March 1848 to fan the flames of revolution in Eastern Europe. He travelled by the stage-coach to Strassburg; and in the *Confession* he invents a fictitious conversation between himself and one of his fellow-passengers:

“Why are you travelling?”

To raise a rebellion.

“Against whom?”

Against the Emperor Nicholas.

“By what means?”

I scarcely know myself.

“Whither are you bound?”

For the Duchy of Posen.

“Why there in particular?”

Because the Poles tell me that there is more life and movement there, and that it is easier to work on Russian Poland from there than from Galicia.

“What funds have you?”

Two thousand francs.

“And hopes of more?”

Nothing definite, but maybe I shall find some.

“You have friends and connexions in the Duchy of Posen?”

Except a few young people whom I used to meet fairly often at Berlin University, I know not a soul there.

“Have you letters of introduction?”

Not one.

“How can you hope, alone and without friends, to match yourself against the Russian Tsar?”

The revolution is on my side, and in Posen I hope to be no longer alone.

“At present all the Germans are denouncing Russia, praising the Poles, and preparing to march with them against the Russian Empire. Will you, a Russian, join them?”

God forbid! If the Germans dare but to set a foot on Slav soil, I shall become their irreconcilable enemy; I am going to Posen in order to resist with all my power this unnatural union of Poles and Germans against Russia.

“But the Poles alone are no match for the Russian power!”

Not alone, but in combination with the other Slavs, particularly if I succeed in winning over the Russians in the Kingdom of Poland.

"On what are your hopes based? Have you any Russian connexions?"

None; my hope is in propaganda and in the mighty spirit of revolution which is now conquering the whole world.

It is a reasonably accurate picture of his frame of mind at the time. He probably overrates, for the benefit of Nicholas, the strength of his Russian patriotism and his distaste for the German alliance, which he was perfectly prepared to use if it served his ends. But he in no way exaggerates the uncalculating recklessness with which he embarked on the adventure. He had neither allies nor plan of campaign.¹

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His first halt on German soil was at Frankfurt. He arrived, in the first days of April, during the brief session of the so-called Pre-Parliament, a self-constituted assembly of professors, journalists, and liberal politicians, who were preparing for the convocation of a German National Assembly. Bakunin had brought letters of recommendation from Herwegh to many of the German democrats; others were introduced to him by Karl Vogt, who was a member of the Assembly. Here too everyone seemed in a state of feverish activity. But the republican and revolutionary wing of the Pre-Parliament was hopelessly outvoted by the moderate liberals; and Bakunin could not find "even a germ of unity in this new tower of Babel". He made an excursion to Mainz, Mannheim, and Heidelberg. He spent several gloomy days in Cologne (where there was still no sign of revolution) waiting for his effects to be sent on to him from Brussels. Then on April 21st, 1848, he reached Berlin.²

Some days earlier, the well-informed Russian Minister in Berlin had informed the Prussian Government that Michael Bakunin, a Russian agitator, was on his way to Berlin and Posen to stir up revolution among the Poles. It was a delicate moment. Since March 18th, the policy of the Prussian authorities had been to make as many concessions in form, and as few in substance, as would appease popular opinion and stay the revolution. They disliked democrats, but were hampered in dealing

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 129; Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, p. 56.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 297-9; iv. 130; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 44; Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, p. 56.

with them by their professed respect for freedom of speech. The Polish question was proving particularly awkward. The Prussian Government had committed itself, in the first flush of enthusiasm, to the establishment of an autonomous Polish province. But the territorial limits of the province remained to be defined, and the Polish National Committee was staking out claims which the most moderate Prussian found exorbitant.

These various embarrassments were reflected in the extremely odd reception which awaited Bakunin in Berlin. On the day following his arrival, before he had had time to visit anyone except Siegmund, Herwegh's wealthy father-in-law, he was placed under arrest. He was invited by Minutoli, the Chief of Police, to give his word of honour that he would not proceed to the Grand-Duchy of Posen, and was informed that, if he gave it, he was free to go instead to Breslau, where Polish propaganda, though equally active, was directed not against Prussia, but against Russia and Austria. Bakunin accepted these conditions. His own passport was impounded by the police. But Léonard Neglinski's passport was returned to him with the careful endorsement "Not valid for Leipzig or the Grand-Duchy of Posen"; and he was provided with a further passport in the name of Simon, a Prussian subject. Having thus doubly obliterated the traveller's identity, Minutoli conveyed to the Russian Minister the gratifying intelligence that the Russian agitator, Michael Bakunin, had been arrested on arrival at Berlin and sent back under escort to Cologne. At the same time the French Ambassador, who had also interested himself, received an assurance that Bakunin "would not on any account be surrendered to the authorities of his own country".¹

Meanwhile Bakunin had in fact been escorted from Berlin as far as Leipzig, where the police officer left him. He halted there for twenty-four hours and visited Ruge. Ruge was busy at an electoral meeting, canvassing for his election as delegate to the National Assembly at Frankfurt. Bakunin roughly bade him "come and drink a bottle of champagne and let them elect whom they will". Nothing would come of the election—"only one more society for the practice of rhetoric, nothing else". Ruge,

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 130-31; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiv. 651; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 40, 82, 151; Pfitzner, *Bakunistudien*, pp. 56, 58; Circourt, *Souvenirs d'une mission à Berlin*, ii. 77.

half resisting, allowed himself to be carried off; and the evening was spent at the Hôtel de Pologne. Bakunin was eloquent on the disappointments of the French, and the futilities of the German, revolution, and on the brighter hopes which were dawning in the east. Ruge listened uneasily; and while they were sitting and drinking, a message was brought to him that his candidature had fallen through. Bakunin was delighted, and swore that "when we Slavs get our revolution under way", Ruge should be amply compensated for the "ingratitude of these Saxon philistines". Next morning Bakunin hurried on to Breslau.¹

There were indeed, for anyone of less exuberant temperament than Bakunin, more solid grounds for disappointment in the west than for confidence in the east. The month of May, which Bakunin spent in Breslau, was one of disillusionment and stagnation. In Baden, at the end of April, the revolutionaries of western Germany had been heavily defeated by loyalist troops, and Herwegh's German legion, which came to their assistance, was routed and dispersed. Nobody else in Germany did anything but talk. The National Assembly at Frankfurt began to draft a hypothetical constitution for a non-existent German federation. From the German revolution Bakunin had never hoped much. But the news from Paris was bitterly disappointing. The provisional government, like all established institutions, was taking on a conservative hue; and in the middle of May it used its troops to break up a demonstration of working-men in front of the Hôtel de Ville. In the Grand-Duchy of Posen, the Prussian-Polish honeymoon had ended in an open breach between Prussia and the autonomous province over the delimitation, which was bitterly described by the Poles as "a fourth partition". The tide of revolution was visibly ebbing. Even at the flood it had never approached the confines of Russia.

Nor did Bakunin's own position in Breslau correspond to his hopes and ambitions. Approximately equidistant from the frontiers of Austrian, Russian, and Prussian Poland, Breslau was an admirable rallying-point for Poles bent on insurrection. In May 1848 it was thronged with Poles—Poles from all over Germany, Poles from Paris, Poles from London, even Poles from Poland. The design of the Polish leaders was to despatch them to Cracow, where a committee was in course of formation

¹ Pfitzner, *Bakunistudien*, p. 57; Ruge, *Briefwechsel*, ii. 43-5.

for the purpose of fomenting insurrection in Russian Poland. But they seemed as innocent as Bakunin himself of any concrete plan of campaign. There was a shortage of both arms and money; and the month slipped away in fruitless discussion. Moreover, though outwardly full of compliments, they were manifestly mistrustful of Bakunin. A Russian sitting aimlessly in Breslau and talking about revolution was necessarily suspect; and the rumour that he was a spy once more circulated. Bakunin was isolated and friendless. A reproachful letter from Maria Poludensky, who was on her way back to Russia, and to whom he had written that they were "parted for ever by an immeasurable abyss", was not calculated to dispel the gloom.¹

It was only in Austria that the revolution still made progress; and Bakunin's thoughts turned naturally southwards. On May 15th there was a fresh popular rising in Vienna, and the Emperor Ferdinand retired to Innsbruck. Hungary was virtually independent. The Slavs of the Empire were restive. Jellačić was raising the Croats against their Hungarian masters. In Prague a Czech National Committee had taken upon itself the functions of a provisional government. The more progressive Czechs had still more extensive ambitions. The German National Assembly had set a precedent. It was time for the Slavs to combine. A Czech committee issued a general open invitation for a Slav Congress to assemble in Prague at the end of May. Slav unity was a vision which had long floated dimly on Bakunin's horizon. In the gloom of Breslau it was a brilliant ray of light. He hastened to Prague, and arrived in time for the opening session of the Congress on June 3rd.

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The Congress met in the Bohemian National Museum. Its president was Palacky, the Czech historian, who was a member of the National Committee. The delegates reached the respectable total of 340. More than two-thirds of them were Czechs and Slovaks; there were some forty Southern Slavs, and sixty Poles and Ruthenes. The largest section of the Slav race was represented only by Michael Bakunin, an outcast from his country, and by a priest named Miloradov, who belonged to the

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 131-2; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 40; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiv. 135; *Circourt*, *Souvenirs d'une mission à Berlin*, ii. 7, 88.

Orthodox sect of Old Believers and hailed from the Bukovina, an Austrian province on the Russian border. Most of the delegates appeared in national costume, and many of the good Czech *bourgeois* of Prague imitated this example in honour of the occasion, so that the old city took on, in the eyes of a critical German observer, the gay, barbaric aspect of an oriental caravanserai. The delegates from afar were quartered on local Slav enthusiasts. Bakunin lodged with a patriotic Czech brewer.¹

The Prague Congress brought Michael face to face for the first time with that fundamental divergence between nationalism and democracy which the political romantics of the nineteenth century were so determined to ignore. The divergence which confronted him was particularly complex and acute. Throughout the German lands, democracy and nationalism had gone comfortably hand in hand. The Austrian German democrats, including the revolutionaries who held Vienna, were ardent pan-Germans. They had no sympathy with Slav aspirations, and assumed as a matter of course that Bohemia, with its large German population and traditional German culture, would remain within the German Confederation. Czechs and Germans were therefore at loggerheads from the outset on this vital point. A similar situation existed further east. The Hungarians, having themselves thrown off the Habsburg yoke, saw no cause to recognise the national aspirations of their Slovak and Croat subjects; and the same bitter antipathy which reigned between Germans and Czechs divided the Hungarians from the Slovaks and the Croats.

In these circumstances, German and Hungarian democrats were both regarded by the Slav nationalists as their sworn foes; and since German and Hungarian democrats were both in revolt against the Habsburg Empire, an incongruous bond was forged between Slavs and Habsburgs. The word went out that the Slavs were "better Austrians" than the Germans. The Czech National Committee at Prague had already sent a delegation to the Emperor Ferdinand at Innsbruck; and the Czech leaders began to dream of a reformed Austrian Empire in which not the Germans but the Slavs (and in particular the Czechs) would be the predominant partners. Some months later the

¹ Nikolaevsky, *Germanoslavica* (1931), No. 2, pp. 303-4; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 152.

Croats were to be the loyal agents of the Habsburgs in crushing the insurrection of the Hungarian democrats. In the tottering fabric of the Habsburg Empire democracy and Slav nationalism appeared as opposing forces.¹

The problems confronting the Slav Congress would have been almost insoluble if the invitation had been confined, as was originally intended, to the Slavs of Austria. But when the invitation was extended to other Slavs, and Poles, Serbs, Montenegrins, and Michael Bakunin took their seats at the Congress, the confusion and conflict of thought became inextricable. The Poles had no difficulty in reconciling democracy and nationalism, and saw their salvation, like Bakunin, in a revolution which would overthrow the Russian Empire. The Slavs of Turkey had no hope of winning their freedom except through the intervention of that very Power which the Poles were seeking to destroy. Meanwhile the Russian question, which for the Poles and Bakunin in one sense, and for the Serbs and Montenegrins in the other, was the focal point of the whole Slav problem, left the Austrian Slavs, who formed the majority of the Congress, completely indifferent.

Bakunin had come to Prague in the hope of finding there a fresh seed-bed of revolution. He found something quite different, which gave a new direction to all his activities. In Paris he had discovered the Poles. In Prague he discovered the remainder of the vast Slav family. His Slav heart, as he explained in the *Confession*, began to beat. He found in the Slavs "an amazing freshness and incomparably more natural intelligence and energy than in the Germans". He was touched by their "child-like enthusiasm", which so much resembled his own. Palacky himself had laid the foundations of Czech nationalism by depicting the history of Bohemia as one long struggle for supremacy between Slav and German. Bakunin perceived that hatred of Germans and of all things German was the hall-mark of the good Slav, and the cement which held the Slav fraternity together. When a former German friend taunted him with the inconvenient fact that the Slav brothers had not even a common language, he replied with spirit that there was one phrase which was understood by all Slavs from the Elbe to the Urals, from the Adriatic to the Balkans: "*Zahrabte niemce!*" ("Down with

¹ Nikolaevsky, *Germanoslavica* (1931), No. 2, p. 308.

the Germans!"). Bakunin refused to admit that these new sentiments were incompatible with his previous convictions. If he had become a Slav patriot, he had not ceased to be a democrat. Two tasks confronted him at Prague; to fuse the diverse, and sometimes conflicting, Slav nationalisms into a single pan-Slav ideal, and then to take this ideal and democratise it.¹

The Congress was divided into three sections or commissions: the northern, consisting of Poles, Ruthenes, and Russians; the western, consisting of Czechs and Slovaks; and the southern, consisting of the miscellaneous groups of Southern Slavs. Bakunin was the secretary of the northern section, and one of the delegates selected by that section to explain its views to the southern section. He delivered speeches both in the northern and southern sections and in plenary sessions of the Congress. None of them has been preserved, but he summarises them at some length in the *Confession*. He adjured his fellow Slavs one and all to forget their "provincial interests". He warned the Czechs against trusting in the Habsburg Empire, which, once it had regained its strength with the aid of Slavs, would have no further interest in promoting Slav independence. He warned the Southern Slavs against looking for help to the Tsar, the oppressor of Slavs in Poland. Let the Slavs unite without Russia (until Russia had won freedom for herself and granted it to Poland) and against Austria. The Russian revolution and the destruction of the Austrian Empire were, as Bakunin rightly foresaw, the two essential conditions of Slav liberation.²

The conception of pan-Slav union was further elaborated by Bakunin in three documents which were submitted to the Congress and afterwards published in the press. In *The Foundations of the New Slav Policy* he explained, with a touching ignorance of psychology, that the Slavs, having themselves been so long the victims of oppression, would never become the oppressors of others. "The new policy", he wrote, with a foretaste of his later anarchistic opinions, "will not be a State policy, but a policy of peoples, of independent, free individuals." *The Foundations of the Slav Federation* provided for the creation of a "Slav Council" which would be the supreme organ of the free

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 132-3; Nikolaevsky, *Germanoslavica* (1931), No. 2, pp. 305-6.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 138-41.

and independent Slav peoples, judging disputes between them and conducting their relations with non-Slav nations. *The Internal Constitution of the Slav Peoples* was the expression of Bakunin's democratic convictions. The "new life" of the Slav peoples was to be based on the three classic principles of the French Revolution—"equality for all, freedom for all, and brotherly love". Serfdom, the caste system, aristocracy, and privilege could find no place among the Slavs. It would be the business of the Slav Council to see that these principles were observed. It is not clear whether these ambitious proposals were actually discussed by the Congress. They were certainly not accepted by it. There was probably not a member of it except Bakunin who could honestly have subscribed to them.¹

In fact, only one document was issued from the Prague Congress—a manifesto to the peoples of Europe. Bakunin was one of those selected to assist the president Palacky in its preparation. "We are preparing", he told a German friend, "a manifesto to the peoples of Europe which is as democratic as the programme of the extreme Left at Frankfurt." The preliminary draft submitted by Bakunin and one of his Polish colleagues may indeed have answered to this description. But the final text which emerged from Palacky's tactful hand was free from any taint of revolution or even democracy. It expressed pious hopes for the transformation of the Austrian Empire into a federation of free peoples, for the appeasement of the Russian-Polish quarrel, and for the liberation of the Slavs of Turkey. It was unanimously adopted by the Congress on Whit-Monday, June 12th, 1848.²

But these public activities did not exhaust Bakunin's energy during the days of the Prague Congress. The less the Congress itself satisfied his hopes, the more eagerly he sought for other means of fulfilling them. Bakunin never for a moment lost sight of his ultimate goal—revolution in Russia. The presence at the Congress of a Russian priest living on the Russian frontier was an irresistible temptation. The Old Believers, the most important of the dissenting sects of the Orthodox Church, had for two centuries, in the face of severe though intermittent persecution, kept up the struggle against Tsardom and Orthodoxy.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 300-305.

² Nikolaevsky, *Germanoslavica* (1931), No. 2, p. 308.

They represented the one spontaneous and indigenous opposition movement in Russia, and provided a natural field for revolutionary propaganda. But Miloradov turned out to be "a regular Russian rogue and sharper". Bakunin had no money; and he soon ascertained that Miloradov was not inclined to render honorary services to the cause of revolution. He turned to other quarters. He sought out those members of the Congress—a handful of Slovaks, Moravians, Croats, and Serbs—who were of like mind with himself, and formed them into a secret society for the promotion of revolutionary aims. It was the first of those innumerable, shadowy secret societies which were later to become Bakunin's ruling passion. But it had no other significance. It had no real existence, and it expired with the Congress itself. Lastly, Bakunin met several young Czech democrats who had held aloof from the Congress, and whose opinions were far more congenial to him than those of Palacky and his friends. Three of them—Arnold, Sabina, and Joseph Frič—will reappear in these pages.¹

The session of June 12th, which adopted Palacky's manifesto, was the last of the Congress. On that day an insurrection broke out in Prague. It was the work of a body of Czech students and working-men, and was altogether independent of the Congress, though the excitement caused by the latter may have been a contributory cause. In the *Confession* Bakunin states that, on the eve of the outbreak, he heard "in a vague and confused way" of what was in the air and endeavoured "in conjunction with others" to dissuade the students from a hopeless enterprise. Whether this be true or not, there is no reason to credit another version which later obtained currency that Bakunin was the principal instigator and organiser of the rising. It was only when the insurrection had begun, and the other members of the Congress were dispersing in fright to their homes, that Bakunin threw himself heart and soul into the fray. However flimsy the prospects, he could not remain inactive when revolution was afoot. He hurried from barricade to barricade encouraging the men, or sat in the Clementinum, the rebel headquarters, with a plan of Prague before him discussing strategy with the leaders. The affair lasted just long enough to flatter the hopes of the

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 137-8, 158; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 114, 125, 128.

insurgents; and there was talk of setting up a revolutionary government. But General Windischgrätz had ample troops, including many loyal Slavs, and welcomed the opportunity for a whiff of grape-shot. On June 16th the centre of the town was bombarded and one or two houses set on fire; and the insurgents surrendered unconditionally. Then and only then, Bakunin slipped away and reached Breslau in safety.¹

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After a short stay in Breslau, Bakunin went on to Berlin; and here he spent the rest of the summer of 1848, sharing lodgings with the useful and ubiquitous Müller-Strübing. It was six years since he had stayed in the Prussian capital. Müller-Strübing introduced him to the new generation of German philosophers and politicians. But Bakunin was no longer the indiscriminating enthusiast of 1842. The successive disappointments of the French, the German, and the Slav revolutions weighed heavily on him. The democrats in Berlin were a timid race, easily cowed by the superior forces of reaction. The "official revolution", Bakunin wrote to Herwegh, rivalled the official reaction "in stupidity and nullity". The revolution in Germany had become "a battle of ghosts who take themselves for real people". Nor could Bakunin be much happier about the Austrian Slavs. When his Swiss friend Fröbel wrote from Vienna that "here, where the Germans are democrats, the Slavs appear as the enemies of democracy", he could only make a half-hearted denial. His thoughts turned more and more to his native land. He called on Varnhagen von Ense, to whom he spoke of his many connexions with Russia, and of a manifesto in Russian, printed in 10,000 copies (not one of which has descended to posterity), on the liberation of the Slavs. In moods of depression Bakunin found relief in such innocent flights of the imagination, which became more frequent and more bewildering as his life went on. They formed the dream world in which, as in the days of his youth, this incorrigible romantic took refuge from stubborn and unwelcome reality.²

Bakunin had personal as well as public grounds for pessimism.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 158; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 695; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. lv-lx.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 316-17, 320-23; Varnhagen, *Tagebücher*, v. 174.

The 2000 francs given him by Flocon were long since exhausted. He was in debt to his landlady, who seized his belongings in default of rent. Notwithstanding all his services and sacrifices in the cause of revolution, he was still pursued by the old slander that he was a Russian Government spy. On July 6th, 1848, it found its way into print for the first time in no less a paper than Karl Marx's *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. It took the form of a message from the paper's Paris correspondent to the effect that George Sand had in her possession documents proving that a Russian recently expelled from Paris, Michael Bakunin, was a tool of Russia. The rumour, which had hitherto passed surreptitiously from mouth to mouth, principally in Polish quarters, was thus blazoned abroad in the most widely circulated organ of German democracy. Bakunin, who was in Breslau, expressed his indignation in the columns of the local paper; and he wrote to George Sand begging her to deny the report in so far as it related to her. The *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* printed both Bakunin's own *démenti* and the denial which George Sand herself sent to them. It added, somewhat complacently, that George Sand's letter "perfectly explained the whole matter"; and the persistent slander was once more laid to rest. Drafts of further letters of protest to the press were afterwards found among Bakunin's papers. But none of these appears to have been completed or despatched.¹

This episode served many years later as one of the counts in the charge of malice brought against Marx by Bakunin and his followers. On this count Marx must be acquitted. In such matters the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* was not less fastidious than its contemporaries of the political press. The report came in a circumstantial form from Paris. Marx did not know Bakunin at all intimately. Russians were always unaccountable, and many of them were known to be spies. The story might or might not be true. Marx printed it, and he printed the denials. He had done his duty. Nor did Bakunin at this time nourish any particular animosity against him. Marx was in Berlin at the end of August, and again in the early part of September, on his way to and from Vienna. An entry in Bakunin's diary shows that they met, perhaps more than once, and that the conversation

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 305-14; iv. 185; Pfitzner, *Bakuninstudien*, pp. 76, 91.

was amicable. A story told by him in 1871 that he had warned Marx on this occasion that he was the head of a secret society, any one of whose members would murder a man at a word from him, belongs to that world of melodramatic fiction in which Bakunin spent so many of his later days.¹

By the middle of September the Russian agents, more merciless than ever, were again on Bakunin's track. It was alleged, and probably believed, that he had bribed two men to go to Russia and assassinate the Tsar. The Prussian authorities had been willing to wink at his presence so long as it was unknown to the Russian Legation. But they were more anxious to oblige the Russian Government, and less afraid of their own radicals, than five months before; and they could afford to treat an inconvenient foreign agitator with less ceremony. Bakunin was arrested and his papers searched, though not before the well-meaning Müller-Strübing had succeeded, somewhat to Bakunin's annoyance, in burning his address-book. The Russian Minister was informed that the seized correspondence revealed connexions with German democrats and Polish *émigrés*, but none with Russia itself. But this did not help Bakunin. He was ordered, without explanation, to leave Prussian soil. He travelled through the night of September 22nd-23rd, 1848, borrowed a pair of scissors from a lady fellow-passenger, and having cut off his beard, alighted in Breslau undetected.

The motive of the choice was obvious. Bakunin once more hoped to use Breslau as his headquarters for operations further east. Ever since the Prague Congress he had been in touch with a Pole from Cracow named Lukasiewicz, who even sent him money, presumably for revolutionary purposes. Stur, one of the Slovak leaders whom he had met at Prague, was eagerly inviting him to Slovakia, and had proposed a rendezvous "somewhere in the Carpathians". In Myslowitz, a village on the Silesian frontier of Russian Poland, there lived a mysterious personage named Anna Lissowska, who served as a secret channel of communication between the Poles in Breslau and the Poles in Russian Poland. Bakunin's first project on arriving in Breslau was to visit Myslowitz. But the journey was deferred; and at the in-

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 319 (the name reproduced by Steklov as "Carrière" can be clearly read in the original in the Dresden Staatsarchiv as "Marx"); *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 303.

vestigation after his arrest, Bakunin firmly denied that he had ever been to Myslowitz or heard of Anna Lissowska. If he had really been in touch with revolutionaries across the Russian frontier, Bakunin was successful, almost for the only time in his life, in covering up his tracks. No such connexions were ever brought home to him; and nothing is recorded of his brief stay in Breslau except his meeting with a Count Skorzewski, a Polish veteran who had served under Napoleon, and who had now made it his mission to act as an intermediary between the Poles of Prussia and the Poles of Paris. By a secret sign, Skorzewski recognised in Bakunin a fellow Mason, introduced him to a local lodge, undertook to obtain from Paris a certificate of his three-year-old membership of the Grand Orient, and urged him to present himself for the rank of Master, "for which you have the necessary qualifications". But all this was soon forgotten. Within a week of Bakunin's arrival the discovery of his identity by the police put an end to his intrigues and his hopes. He was officially warned that if he stayed any longer on Prussian soil he would be handed over to the Russian Government. He was given a passport to proceed to Belgium. But he could not bear the thought of retiring once more from the prospective scene of revolution to an obscure backwater. On October 8th, 1848, he moved to Dresden. Here an old request of the Russian Government for his expulsion, dating back to 1844, was looked up, and within forty-eight hours he was told to go. Hemmed in on all sides, Bakunin found refuge at last in the little town of Koethen in the Duchy of Anhalt, which, though forming an enclave (or rather a series of enclaves) in Prussian territory, was an independent state where Prussian and Saxon decrees did not run.¹

The political status of Anhalt made Koethen at this time a convenient haven for other political fugitives from Prussian authority. Bakunin met here old acquaintances from Berlin, and corresponded surreptitiously with others. There was a young local hothead named Enno Sander, who was continually hatching mysterious plots with democrats in Berlin, Leipzig, and Dresden, and whom Bakunin found thoroughly congenial. But the place was too small and too isolated for serious political

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 308, 323-5, 538; iv. 164; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 51, 83, 94, 101-4, 160, 686; Pfitzner, *Bakuninstudien*, pp. 52-5, 78-9; Circourt, *Souvenirs d'une mission à Berlin*, i. 366; ii. 138-40.

activity; and its pleasant situation between the Elbe and the Saale, not far from the eastern spurs of the Harz mountains, was calculated to remind Bakunin of the joys of country life which he had not known since leaving Russia more than eight years before. Keil, a Leipzig journalist and publisher who visited him in Koethen, draws a picture of him sitting with a little girl on his knee telling her tales of his brothers and sisters and of his own childhood in Russia. The life of a nineteenth-century international revolutionary was a grim and forbidding business. It was passed in the great cities which were the centres of political activity. Its sole recreation was a running game of hide-and-seek with the minions of authority. If Bakunin had other diversions, they have left little trace in his correspondence or in the records of his career left by himself or by his friends. It is therefore pleasant to record that, during these autumn weeks at Koethen, he scoured the countryside with his companions shooting "hares and other wild animals". It was probably at this time also that he penned the most curious of all the documents found in his possession when he was arrested six months later—the fragment of an erotic novelette mentioned in an earlier chapter.¹

But even during these days of enforced repose, Bakunin's surging brain was not at rest. It still ranged over the unsolved problems of Slavs, Germans, Magyars, and revolution. In December there appeared *An Appeal to the Slavs: By a Russian Patriot Michael Bakunin, Member of the Slav Congress in Prague*. The title-page bore the indication "Published by the Author, Koethen 1848". The actual printing was done by Keil in Leipzig. The publication of the *Appeal to the Slavs* provides the most convenient halting-place for a review of Bakunin's political philosophy at this important crisis of his life.²

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 164-6; Nikolaevsky, *Katorga i Ssylka* (1930), Nos. 8-9, p. 112; Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, pp. 63-78.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 345-66; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 133.

CHAPTER 14

THE CREED OF A REVOLUTIONARY

FEW men whose life and thought have exercised so powerful an influence on the world as those of Michael Bakunin have left so confused and imperfect a record of their opinions. Bakunin was a prolific, but incoherent, writer. His temperament inclined him to rely on the inspiration of the moment, on the spoken rather than the written word.

No theory, no ready-made system, no book that has ever been written [he wrote to one of his correspondents] will save the world. I cleave to no system, I am a true seeker.

Revolution, he declared elsewhere, was "instinct rather than thought". Faithful to this principle, he rarely attempted any systematic exposition of his faith, and still more rarely finished what he had begun. Reichel reports that Bakunin was engaged, when they lived together in Paris, on an "immortal book, which he used to write every day without ever finishing it". References to an epoch-making work in course of composition (though its subject appears to have varied from time to time) can be found in his correspondence from Paris. But it never saw the light, and there is no reason to suppose that it ever made serious progress. Since *Reaction in Germany*, written in the autumn of 1842, Bakunin had given to the world no considered statement of his political philosophy. The article on Communism in the *Schweizerische Republikaner* (assuming it to have been Bakunin's work) had been a mark of interrogation which suggested much, but affirmed nothing. In Paris he had published nothing but the protest in *La Réforme* against his own condemnation, a short article denouncing the religious persecutions practised by the Orthodox Church in Lithuania and White Russia, and finally his speech at the Polish banquet. The first six feverish months of the revolution had left him no time or inclination to wield a pen. Even now that he had found repose in Koethen, he might not have broken silence but for an impulse from without. The

irrepressible Müller-Strübing wrote from Berlin begging him to issue "an appeal to the Slav democrats".¹

The challenge was not one which could be ignored. By a curious irony Bakunin had espoused, through the accident of his birth, that form of nationalism which made the identification of patriotism with democracy particularly difficult. In the eighteen-forties, Italian, Polish, and (subject to certain trifling aberrations) German nationalism went hand in hand with the demand for political liberty. Slav nationalism, except in Poland, was plainly recalcitrant to this alliance. Czechs, Slovaks, and Southern Slavs, who supplied nearly all the active Slav patriots, were forced by the circumstances described in the last chapter to choose between nationalism and democracy; and most of them patently preferred the former. Since Windischgrätz, supported by loyal Slav troops and applauded by the Czech *bourgeoisie*, had trained his guns on the workers and students in the streets of Prague, the Slavs had been associated with the most striking victories of the counter-revolution. In August Croat detachments had marched into Milan behind Radetsky to strangle Italian democracy at its birth; and there were atrocities which were laid at the door of the "Croat barbarians". At the very moment when Michael received Müller-Strübing's letter in peaceful Koethen, Slav troops under Windischgrätz and Jellačić, the Croat leader, were closing in on Vienna. On November 1st they occupied the city, dissolved the Reichstag, arrested the democratic deputies, and shot Robert Blum, the delegate from Frankfurt. In the background towered a darker Slav threat. Tsar Nicholas, now sure of his own safety, was growing visibly impatient to send good Russian soldiers to stamp out the revolutionary conflagration in Central Europe. It was no wonder that German democrats like Marx and Engels should murmur that the Slavs were a counter-revolutionary race and the natural enemies of democracy.

But the Slav problem was not the only one which troubled European revolutionaries in the autumn of 1848. The confident hopes of February and March were now only a memory. The reaction which had begun in April and May had developed into a general retreat—almost a rout. In June Windischgrätz's whiff

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 235, 237, 317; iv. 98; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 556; Pfitzner, *Bakuninstudien*, pp. 20, 92.

of grape-shot in Prague had showed how easily a handful of troops could dispose of an urban proletariat. It was followed ten days later by a similar exploit on the part of General Cavaignac in Paris. There were three days of street fighting, followed by a few hundred executions on the Champ de Mars and a few thousand transportations; and the soldiers had saved the *bourgeois* republic from the proletariat. In September there were barricades in the streets of Frankfurt, and the National Assembly, whose impotence required no further demonstration, was saved by the intervention of Prussian troops. About the same time a mass meeting near Cologne, at which Engels and Lassalle spoke, hoisted a red flag and proclaimed a socialist republic. But the sole result of this gesture was that the principal participants had to fly for their lives. At the end of September a socialist republican government was actually proclaimed in Baden, but survived for no more than a few days. Then at the beginning of November the tale of disaster was completed by the suppression of the Viennese democracy. Everywhere the *bourgeoisie*, in the summer and autumn of 1848, welcomed the arrival of the soldiers to conjure the revolutionary monster which they themselves had evoked a few months before. If the choice lay between reaction and the proletariat, reaction evidently offered less danger to the lives and property of good *bourgeois* citizens.

Such were the unpromising conditions in which Bakunin, soon after his arrival at Koethen, sat down to write his *Appeal to the Slavs*. He was not one to admit failure or yield to despair. If the revolution had not yet succeeded, it was because it had not gone far enough. The need for more and yet more revolution was his theme. He wrote in French, which still came more easily to him than German, and with unusual care. Some half-dozen drafts or fragments of drafts were found among his papers on his arrest six months later. About the beginning of November, a final draft (which has not been preserved) was sent to Müller-Strübing in Berlin for translation into German. But the democrats of Berlin arrogated to themselves more extended functions than those of translation. They were themselves more than half *bourgeois* by tradition and inclination. The position in Prussia was critical. The fate of the democrats hung by a thread; and they could guess how certain passages in the *Appeal*, in which

Bakunin threw down a challenge to the whole social order, would be used to frighten the timid *bourgeois* into the reactionary camp. It was a heavily censored version of the original draft which returned to Bakunin in Koethen. He submitted with surprising meekness to this mutilation of his work. He added some new passages, mostly relating to Austria, and sent the final text to Keil, the Leipzig publisher, to be printed.¹

The *Appeal to the Slavs*, together with its preparatory drafts, forms a comprehensive (though in detail sometimes confused) statement of Bakunin's opinions as they emerged from the shocks and disappointments of the 1848 revolution. His ideas may be briefly summarised in three sentences. First, he believed that the *bourgeoisie* had revealed itself as a specifically counter-revolutionary force, and that the future hopes of revolution lay with the working-class. Secondly, he believed that an essential condition of revolution was the break-up of the Austrian Empire, and the establishment in Central and Eastern Europe of a federation of free Slav republics. Thirdly, he believed that the peasantry, and in particular the Russian peasantry, would prove a decisive force in bringing about the final and successful revolution. These three conceptions were the basis of all Bakunin's activity at this time.

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The rejection of the *bourgeoisie* was the first essential point of Bakunin's new programme.

The revolution of 1848 had been the work of the *bourgeoisie*. Inspired by the traditional *bourgeois* watchwords of liberty and equality, it rejected aristocracy, but was prepared to retain monarchy tempered by a constitution which assured the political and economic predominance of the *bourgeoisie*. It did not demand, and did not desire, the complete overthrow of the existing framework of society. The institution of private property was the bulwark of *bourgeois* supremacy; and when this bulwark was threatened, the *bourgeoisie* rallied to its defence as brutally and vindictively as the aristocracy had formerly rallied to the defence of its privileges. The proletariat wished to con-

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 345-66; Pfützner, *Bakunistudien*, pp. 78-106. (In addition to the draft of the *Appeal to the Slavs* printed by Pfützner, several other drafts or fragments of drafts are preserved in the Dresden Staatsarchiv.)

tinue the revolution until every privilege, including that of the *bourgeoisie*, had been swept away; and this new extension of the conception of revolution turned the *bourgeoisie* at one stroke into stubborn counter-revolutionaries and defenders of privilege. In the summer and autumn of 1848, consistent radicals like Marx and Bakunin weighed the *bourgeoisie* in the revolutionary scales and found it wanting.

It is a matter for conjecture what part Marx's influence played at this time in the evolution of Bakunin. Three years before, in the famous prophecy that the signal for European revolution would be given by "the crowing of the Gallic cock", Marx had declared that the "heart" of the revolution was the proletariat. The *Communist Manifesto*, published in February 1848, had foretold the final victory of revolution in the form of the overthrow of the *bourgeoisie* by the proletariat. Bakunin, whether he had read the *Manifesto* or not, must have been familiar with the doctrine. But down to the time of the Prague Congress he showed no signs of accepting it. His social programme at the Congress was purely *bourgeois*. It was based on the three catchwords of 1789, and demanded only the abolition of serfdom, aristocracy, and privilege. Bakunin had discovered the proletariat in Switzerland five years before. But it still played no part in his political philosophy.

The sequel of the Prague Congress shattered Bakunin's faith in the *bourgeois* revolution. The Slav *bourgeoisie* had not only preferred nationalism to democracy, but had stood tolerantly by while Windischgrätz's soldiers shot down the revolutionary students and workers. On June 21st, 1848, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* under Marx's editorship had started publication in Cologne; and throughout July, August, and September, while Bakunin sat despondently in Breslau and Berlin, Marx was thundering out his denunciation of the "white terror" of Paris, of the "parliamentary cretinism" of the Frankfurt National Assembly, and of the cowardly and contemptible *bourgeoisie* whose counter-revolutionary proclivities were responsible for the defeat of democracy. Bakunin must have been a reader of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, the most important radical organ in Germany; and he met Marx in September in Berlin. The transition was easy and natural. Bakunin had always preached negation; and now that the *bourgeoisie* barred further advance

on the path of destruction, it must count him among its enemies. The logic of events, aided perhaps by Marx's trenchant propaganda, rapidly transformed Bakunin from a *bourgeois* into a proletarian revolutionary. He never forgave the *bourgeoisie* for its desertion, and to the end of his life spoke of it with scorn and bitterness. "Do you know", he said once to a good *bourgeois* Swiss professor, "why everything is going so badly with the *bourgeois* world? Because this respectable class is physiologically dead. It can no longer . . ." ¹

The change which came over Bakunin's outlook in 1848 was one from political to social revolution. Prior to 1848, revolutionaries had been content to associate themselves with the demands of the *bourgeoisie* for representative institutions and the abolition of privilege. Now this political programme had become an anachronism. In Paris, a representative assembly had applauded the shooting and transportation of working-men by Cavaignac. In Frankfurt, a representative assembly was busy discussing a hypothetical paper constitution, while the real issues which would decide the future of Germany were being fought out between the revolutionary proletariat and Prussian troops. It was Proudhon who coined the decisive *mot*: "Universal suffrage is counter-revolution". Marx and Bakunin followed the same path. Constitutional democracy was as inimical as privileged aristocracy to the cause of revolution. Nothing but the overthrow of the whole social order would suffice.

It was temperamentally easier for Bakunin than for Marx to renounce representative institutions. Bred a Russian and an aristocrat, he had no natural inclination to accept the counting of heads as a means of discovering political wisdom. He loved liberty, but was repelled by equality. Equality had been for him a catchword and an ideal, never a living faith. From this time forward he misses no opportunity of expressing his contempt of constitutions and parliaments.

I am very little interested in the parliamentary debates [he wrote to Herwegh in August]. The epoch of parliamentary life, of Constituent and National Assemblies and so forth, is over. Anyone who squarely asks himself the question must confess that he no longer

¹ Vyrubov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), p. 79.

feels any interest, or only forced and unreal interest, in these ancient forms. I do not believe in constitutions and laws; the best constitution in the world would not be able to satisfy me. We need something different: inspiration, life, a new lawless and therefore free world.

And he reiterates this attitude with perfect sincerity in the *Confession*:

I wanted a republic. But of what kind? Not a parliamentary republic. Representative government, constitutional forms, parliamentary aristocracy and the so-called balance of powers, where the active forces are so cunningly arranged that not one of them can be effective—in a word all that narrow, cleverly interwoven, vapid political catechism of Western liberals—never won my admiration, nor my sympathy, nor even my respect; and at that time I began to despise them still more, seeing the fruits of parliamentary forms in France, in Germany, and even at the Slav Congress.

In rejecting the claim of parliamentary democracy to represent the people, Bakunin spoke a language which has become more familiar in the twentieth century than it was in the nineteenth.¹

This new social programme found its way into the first drafts of the *Appeal to the Slavs*:

Two great questions have of their own accord come to the front since the first days of the spring: the social question, and that of the independence of all nations, the emancipation of the peoples within and without. It was a few individuals, it was not a party, it was the perfect instinct of the masses which raised these two questions above all others and demanded their prompt solution. The whole world understood that liberty was a lie where the great majority of the population is reduced to a wretched existence, where, deprived of education, of leisure, and of bread, it is condemned to serve as a stepping-stone for the powerful and the rich.

Bakunin's old doctrine of pan-destruction was repeated with renewed emphasis and with a distinctively social flavour:

We must overthrow the material and moral conditions of our present-day life. We must overthrow from top to bottom this effete social world, which has become impotent and sterile, and could not support or sustain so great a mass of freedom. We must first purify our atmosphere and transform completely the *milieu* in which we live; for it corrupts our instincts and our wills, and contracts our heart and our intelligence. The social question takes the form primarily of the overthrow of society.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 317-18; iv. 153.

But the timid *bourgeois* democrats of Berlin, still dreaming of the constitutional liberties which were slipping so rapidly from their grasp, were not prepared for this vigorous assertion of social revolution for the masses. The passages just quoted, and others of a similar tenor, disappeared from the draft. In the published version of the *Appeal to the Slavs*, the social question is barely touched on.¹

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The liberation of the Slav peoples, the second part of Bakunin's programme, becomes, in the absence of the social question, the central theme in the final version of the *Appeal*.

In Paris, the conception of revolution as the bringer of freedom not only to oppressed individuals, but to the oppressed nations, had been limited by Bakunin to Poland and treated by him mainly as an aspect of the Russian question. In Prague, he extended it to the other Slav peoples who were clamouring for release from Austrian or Turkish domination. In the latter part of 1848, he made an unusually thorough study of the whole Slav question. His papers of this period contain page after page of ethnological statistics. He discovered that among the twelve million inhabitants of Turkey in Europe there were less than a million Turks and more than six million Slavs. Among the sixteen million inhabitants of Hungary, he reckoned, by some process best known to himself, eight million Slavs and not more than four million Magyars.

Bakunin was conscious of some of the embarrassments of his programme of Slav liberation. The liberation of the Slavs of Turkey was more likely to be achieved by the triumph of Russian imperialism than by revolution. Bakunin consoled himself with the reflexion that nothing could save Turkey's "artificial power" from impending dissolution; she was "incurable like a man who bears within himself the germ of a fatal disease". The liberation of the Ruthenes of Eastern Galicia was bitterly opposed by the Poles, who in this area played the rôle of landowners and oppressors. In this case, Bakunin chose to assume that the landowners, being Poles, were "democratically inclined and inspired by the spirit of liberty"; and on this unverified but convenient assumption, he was content to leave the peasant at the

¹ Pfitzner, *Bakunistudien*, pp. 101-2.

mercy of the master. The liberation of the Slavs of Hungary presented no theoretical difficulty. The Magyars who were struggling for freedom from the Habsburgs were a compact *bloc* in the centre and west of the territory; and no sympathy need be felt for the Magyar landowners of Croatia and Slovakia.¹

The greatest embarrassment of all was in part removed by events which occurred while Bakunin was actually engaged in writing the *Appeal*. So long as democracy was in the saddle at Vienna, the ineradicable antipathy between Austrian democracy and Czech nationalism drove the latter into the arms of the Habsburgs, and gave the Slav programme a counter-revolutionary complexion. But when, at the beginning of November 1848, the Viennese democrats were crushed, and the Habsburgs became once more effective masters of German Austria, the Czech *bourgeois* nationalists had more to fear than to hope from the Imperial power. The tacit alliance between Slav and Habsburg ceased to operate as soon as the common enemy disappeared. The freedom of Bohemia from the German yoke could once more be represented as a democratic cause. In Bakunin's hands, the conception of Slav liberation took on a new and more concrete form. It meant, first and foremost, the break-up of the Habsburg Empire. For this, if for no other, reason the *Appeal to the Slavs* is a landmark in European history. It was the first occasion on which, exactly seventy years before November 1918, the destruction of the Austrian Empire and the building up of new Slav states on its ruins were publicly advocated.

In this demand, Bakunin stood almost alone among European radicals. The Slavs of Central Europe presented a new and unfamiliar problem which even the Prague Congress had not succeeded in imprinting on European consciousness. The French were ignorant and indifferent. So was Herzen, the only Russian besides Bakunin who counted on the radical side. The Germans were either indifferent or hostile to the proposed aggrandisement of Slavdom. Among the implacable opponents of the scheme were Marx and Engels. The *Appeal to the Slavs* was unsparingly dissected six weeks after its publication, in two articles from the pen of Engels which appeared in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* under the title *Democratic Pan-Slavism*. What, asked Engels,

¹ *Materials*, ed. Polonsky, i. 22-3; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 385.

could be more absurd than to form "five and a half million Czechs, Moravians, and Slovaks into one state, and five and a half million Southern Slavs, together with the Slavs of Turkey, into another"? None of these Slav peoples occupied compact *blocs* of territory; and what could be done with the German majorities in the towns? If Poland demanded her seaboard on the Baltic, how could Austria and Hungary be deprived of theirs on the Adriatic?

Except the Poles, the Russians, and, at best, the Slavs of Turkey, no Slav people has any future, simply because all the other Slavs lack the primary historical, geographical, political, and economic prerequisites of independence and ability to exist.

Moreover, these Slavs were not, as Bakunin pretended, revolutionaries at all, but fundamentally *bourgeois* and reactionary. The assistance rendered by Jellačić and the Croats to the counter-revolution was characteristic of the true Slav spirit. The alleged aspirations of the Slavs of Central Europe were, in Engels' eyes, no more than a pawn in the game of Nicholas I and the autocracy.¹

It is an incontrovertible fact that Engels disliked the Slavs quite as heartily as Bakunin disliked the Germans, and that naïve racial prejudice rather than any profound difference of principle was the dividing line between them. But the difference of principle nevertheless existed, and coloured the thought of both. Bakunin clung fast to the romantic belief (he shed it only after the failure of the Polish insurrection of 1863) that democracy and nationalism were twin forces expressing themselves in the same revolutionary impulse. Marx and Engels, being consistent materialists and believing in the social and economic character of revolution, could afford to regard nationalism as a reactionary force. Bakunin, as a nationalist, supported Slav nationalism, though his principles failed to inspire him with any of the same enthusiasm for German nationalism. Marx and Engels, as internationalists, condemned Slav nationalism, though the corresponding phenomenon of German nationalism found them comparatively tolerant. On the issue between nationalism and internationalism history has not yet delivered its final judgment. Nor perhaps has it yet said its last word on

¹ Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, vii. 203-20.

the problem of the Slavs of Central Europe. Bakunin triumphed in 1918. But there are still people who share the opinion of Engels.

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The third article of Bakunin's faith, his belief in the revolutionary force of the peasantry, is implicit in the *Appeal to the Slavs*. It is more specifically expressed in some articles on *Russian Conditions* which he began to write after the *Appeal* and published in the following April in the *Dresdener Zeitung*.¹

The attitude of Marx and Bakunin towards the peasantry reveals as sharp a divergence between them as their attitude towards nationalism. Marx, town-dweller and product of the industrial revolution, placed the peasantry at the lowest point of the revolutionary scale. He divided the working-class, from the standpoint of its capacity for revolution, into three categories—the organised and class-conscious urban proletariat, which is deliberately striving for revolution; the lower grade of urban worker, or *Lumpenproletariat*, which is not yet class-conscious or organised for revolution; and the peasantry. The second category at any rate provides potential material for revolution and fertile soil for propaganda. The third category was not merely valueless to the revolutionary cause, but definitely hostile to it. In his more polemical writings Marx cheerfully referred to the peasants as "native barbarians" and "troglo-dytes", and declared that, since they did not form a class, they were incapable of defending their own class interests. The rural population, in Marx's eyes, was always a bulwark of counter-revolution.

This supposed opposition between town and country workers was altogether foreign to Bakunin's mind. He had been accustomed from his childhood to a rural population of serfs; and serfs manned the few factories which existed in the Russia of that day. Bakunin was always prepared to assume that the interests and sentiments of agricultural and industrial labour were identical. In Switzerland, he had met the small craftsmen who were Weitling's principal followers, and had even declared his intention of joining the proletariat if financial succour did not arrive from his parents. In Paris, he had admired the "noble workers" who enrolled themselves in Caussidière's National

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 399-426.

Guard. In Prague, he had seen the Czech proletariat combine with the students to raise the standard of revolution. But still, when he thought of the working-class which was to arise and overthrow *bourgeois* civilisation, his mind dwelt on the peasant rather than on the industrial labourer. If the peasants of France and Germany had hitherto appeared comparatively indifferent to the revolution, it was because the leaders had made the "enormous mistake" of concentrating all their efforts on the towns.¹

The mission of making the revolution effective rested, however, not with the peasant in general but, specifically, with the Russian peasant. Five years ago, Bakunin had proudly announced his conviction that Russia "was called on to play a great rôle in the sacred field of democracy". Now he found confirmation of this patriotic belief in Rousseau's doctrine of a prehistoric golden age and of the enervating effects of civilisation. In the early 'forties a German traveller named Haxthausen discovered the Russian system of communal land-tenure, and diagnosed it as the unique survival of a hypothetical prehistoric communism. The Russian peasant, less exposed to the ravages of civilisation than other Europeans, had retained not only more of the vigour and freshness of primitive mankind, but the relics of that primitive, blessed state in which men held all things in common. This convenient theory met with Bakunin's warm approval. He deduced from it that the Russian peasant was not merely the last heir of the communistic golden age of the past, but the harbinger of the communistic golden age of the future. The revolutionary mission of the Russian peasantry was intimately bound up with its communistic organisation. "The character of the Russian revolution as a social revolution is thus clearly marked out in advance, and is rooted in the whole character of the people, in its communal constitution."²

The Russian peasant had behind him a powerful revolutionary tradition. In 1670 Stenka Razin, a Don Cossack, had raised the peasants of south-eastern Russia against the Tsar Alexis. For months on end, bands roamed the country plundering and burning; and after his death, popular imagination raised Stenka Razin to the status of a legendary hero. Almost exactly a century later, a peasant named Pugachev headed a

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 169.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 179, 408.

still more serious rising against Catherine the Great. Pugachev set up a kind of revolutionary government, proclaiming the liberation of the peasants, the execution of the landowners, and the destruction of their property. For nearly two years he was in a position to carry out his threats and promises over a large part of the Volga basin. The affair of Pugachev was the worst fright the Russian Empire ever had; and it added a new word to the Russian language (*Pugachevshchina*) to commemorate the turbulent instincts of the Russian peasant.

Bakunin returns again and again in his writings of this period to Pugachev's rebellion. It was the "first great protest of the rural population against its oppressors". It was "not the first peasant revolution in Russia, and not the last". Even in the comparatively orderly days of Nicholas I there were many cases on record of peasants rising against and murdering their masters. Sooner or later, peasant revolution was inevitable; and the longer it was deferred, the more terrible and more destructive it would be. Russia was innocent of the humanitarian traditions of Western Europe. Human life counted for little in the balance. Every "living fruit of human progress", Bakunin declared, had been "watered with human blood". He spoke with enthusiasm of the "childish, almost demoniac delight of the Russian people in fire". It was by setting fire to Moscow—a truly Russian act—that the Russian people asserted its will against Napoleon. Soon the Russian peasant would begin to burn down the castles of his masters; and the flames would kindle a world-wide blaze in which civilisation would be overthrown. Herzen relates that Bakunin "on the way from Paris to Prague" met some German peasants shouting and demonstrating round a baron's castle. He alighted from his carriage, showed them what to do, and, as he drove away, saw to his satisfaction that the whole castle was in flames. He was perfectly prepared to imagine "the whole of Europe, with St. Petersburg, Paris, and London, transformed into a vast rubbish-heap". A contemporary historical novel attributes to him a description of democracy which may well be authentic: "Democracy is a temple of fire wherein the human race must be purged from the dross of slavery".¹

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 406; iv. 23, 38-9, 43; Wagner, *My Life*, pp. 468-9; Nikolaevsky, *Katorga i Syylka* (1930), Nos. 8-9, p. 127.

About the time when Bakunin began to proclaim to the world the revolutionary destiny of the Russian people, Konstantin Aksakov, whom he had once met in Moscow, was elaborating a doctrine which, proceeding from the same premises and displaying many of the same features, reached a conclusion diametrically opposite. The Moscow Slavophiles, of whom Aksakov was the most important, laid as much emphasis as Bakunin on the peculiar unspoiled qualities of the Russian peasant and the peculiar destiny of the Slav race. The communal system of land-holding in the Russian countryside belonged to the epoch before Peter the Great had made Russia into a modern state; and this act of Peter, like Rousseau's "civilisation", was the source of the degeneracy of the modern age. The mission of the Slavs was to combat the materialism of modern civilisation, and to bring back Russia (and, through Russia, the world) to that state of primitive perfection which the Slavophiles discovered in pre-Petrine Muscovy. The conclusions of Aksakov were reactionary, while those of Bakunin were revolutionary. But the conclusions of both were purely arbitrary, and the teaching of both was identical in its essential features: its romantic theory of the Russian peasant, and its belief in the peculiar world mission of the Slavs. Twenty years later, when the Russian Slavophiles had become a powerful reactionary party associated with the extremest forms of Russian nationalism, Bakunin was constantly held up to opprobrium by Marx and others as a thinly disguised Slavophile.

But in the winter of 1848-9 these embarrassments still belonged to the distant future. Nobody was looking for reactionary undercurrents in Bakunin's programme. It was a programme of undiluted revolution, political, social, and national. It would dethrone kings and emperors, destroy the power and riches of the *bourgeoisies*, dissolve the unnatural conglomeration of races known as the Austrian Empire, and, through the liberation of the Slav peoples, pave the way for a European federation of free republics. These dreams were completed by another—the dream of the Russian revolution, thought of sometimes as the starting-point, sometimes as the culmination, of the universal revolution, but always as its crown and quintessence. For in his revolutionary passions Michael Bakunin remained passionately Russian.

CHAPTER 15

SHIPWRECK

ON December 30th, 1848, Bakunin, weary of inaction and of the narrow provincial life of Koethen, moved to Leipzig. His expulsion from Dresden in the autumn had provoked an angry interpellation in the Chamber; and his friends had extracted some sort of assurance from the Saxon Government that, if he returned to Saxony, he would not be molested. But Bakunin was taking no chances. He lived in concealment and frequently changed his address. He is heard of lodging, first at the Golden Cock Inn, then with a bookseller named Schreck, then with two brothers named Straka, young Czech students in the faculty of Divinity. Bakunin's first concern was to arrange with Keil the publisher for a Polish translation of the *Appeal to the Slavs*, which was made by a Pole from Dresden named Andrzejkowicz. Then he plunged into a big work on the political situation of Russia. Characteristically, it was never completed. But fragments of it subsequently appeared as the series of articles on *Russian Conditions*, which have been quoted in the previous chapter. Throughout this time Bakunin was still in dire penury. He had come to Leipzig with an empty pocket. Reichel sent him a small sum from Paris. Otherwise he had to rely on loans and contributions from local sympathisers. Since the latter were themselves seldom far above the poverty-line, it is perhaps surprising that his income reached even the average of 100 thalers a month mentioned in the *Confession*.¹

On these modest resources Bakunin made his first attempt to organise a revolutionary international. German participation was easily provided for. His closest German friends were two young men named D'Ester and Hexamer, who had just created a new pan-German democratic committee. Both had been refugees with him in Koethen, and D'Ester he had already known in Brussels. France presented greater difficulty. Bakunin sent a

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 525; iv. 166-7, 173; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 43, 47, 171, 190; Pfitzner, *Bakuninstudien*, p. 72.

copy of the *Appeal to the Slavs*, together with a long letter, to Flocon, begging him to send a French democratic delegate to Leipzig. There were always plenty of Poles and Czechs available; and two Wends arrived from Lusatia, making their first tentative appearance in history as a national minority. Bakunin thought of applying to Count Teleki, Kossuth's diplomatic agent in Paris, to provide a Hungarian. But these ambitious schemes were still-born. The Poles were unresponsive. Flocon did not even answer his letter. D'Ester and Hexamer were willing and energetic, but they had no great following among their compatriots.¹

It was only among the Czechs that Bakunin enjoyed any measure of success. The *Appeal to the Slavs* made a considerable impression in Prague, where almost the whole of it was reprinted in the form of leading articles in the *Slavonic Lime-Tree*, the paper of the patriotic Czech society of the same name. The Czechs began to take the place which the Poles had once occupied in Bakunin's heart. He converted the Straka brothers from good *bourgeois* Czech nationalists into ardent revolutionaries. He sent Gustav Straka to Prague to summon to a conference with him in Leipzig two Czech democrats whose acquaintance he had made at the Prague Congress: Sabina, the editor of the *Slavonic Lime-Tree*, and Arnold, the editor of another Czech newspaper. But here jealousy intervened. Sabina and Arnold were at daggers drawn, and the latter came to Leipzig alone. Bakunin had of late had nothing but disappointments in his revolutionary schemes. He was so delighted that a real Czech should come all the way from Prague to talk revolution with him that he threw himself into Arnold's arms.²

Arnold spent twenty-four hours at the Golden Cock. The greater part of the time was wasted in fruitless discussions with D'Ester and Hexamer, who wanted to arrange a joint German-Slav Congress in Leipzig. Bakunin opposed this "stupid project". He had done with public congresses and open organisations which existed just as long as the authorities chose to tolerate them. A year's experience of revolution had convinced him (it was a conviction from which he never afterwards swerved) that the existing order could be effectively attacked

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 173-5.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 167-8; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 125, 477.

only by underground mining and secret conspiracy. After the general conversation, he had Arnold to himself for four or five hours; and within this time he had spun from his brain a whole network of secret societies to cover Bohemia and to involve every town and village in a web of revolution. At the end of the twenty-four hours Arnold set out for Prague, half convinced, half protesting, complaining that he had no money, and wondering at times whether what he had heard at the Golden Cock was dream or reality.¹

What Arnold did when he returned to Prague from this nightmare conference is not recorded. At any rate he wrote nothing to Bakunin, who was left at the mercy of his own imagination. But Bakunin could not live on conjectures. He must know what was going on in Prague—the spot where all his hopes now centred. Among the *habitués* of the Golden Cock was a young Austrian Pole named Heimberger (being a patriot, he made an attempt to translate his name into Polish as Lasogorski), a student of music at Leipzig Conservatorium. About the time when Bakunin's patience had reached breaking-point, Heimberger announced that he was leaving on a visit to his parents in Vienna. The chance was too good to miss. With his customary lightheartedness, Bakunin initiated Heimberger into the secrets of the great Bohemian enterprise, begging him to stop in Prague on his way back from Vienna and bring a report on what Arnold was doing. Heimberger executed this commission with fidelity and despatch. He reported, in effect, that Arnold was doing nothing at all. Indomitable as ever, Bakunin persuaded the impressionable Heimberger to return once more to Prague for the double purpose of setting on foot yet another revolutionary organisation and of spying on Arnold.²

As this was the first of that strange series of half-real, half-imaginary secret societies of which Bakunin's brain became, in his later years, so prolific, it is worth while to quote from the *Confession* his own account of its inception:

The society was to consist of three separate independent societies under different names and unacquainted with one another: one for the *bourgeois*, one for the students, and one for the villages. Each was

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 177-8, 180, 192; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 190.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 180-81; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 190, 197, 421, 430.

subject to a strict hierarchy and to unconditional obedience; but each in its details and in its form corresponded to the character and strength of the class for which it was designed. These societies were to be limited to a small number of people and were to include as far as possible only able, experienced, energetic, and influential men who, in strict obedience to a central control, would in their turn work invisibly on the masses. All three societies were co-ordinated by a central committee, which would have consisted of three, or at most five, members: myself, Arnold, and others whom we should have had to select. . . . I hoped in this way to establish and strengthen my influence in Bohemia; and at the same time, without Arnold's knowledge, I authorised a young German student from Vienna, who has since fled from Austria, to organise a society on the same lines among the Germans of Bohemia, in the central committee of which I should not at first have participated openly, though I should have been its secret director. So that if my plan had been carried out, all the chief threads of the movement would have been concentrated in my hands, and I could have been sure that the intended revolution in Bohemia would not stray from the lines I had laid down for it.

It is a characteristic blend of megalomania, vanity, and naïve disingenuousness which thus makes its first appearance in Bakunin's life shortly before the period of his imprisonment. In theory a protagonist of absolute liberty, and ready both now and later to denounce in the bitterest terms the rigid discipline of communism, Bakunin resorted, in the organisation of his revolutionary activities, to methods which were not only the precise contradiction of his own principles, but went far beyond the most extreme ambitions of the dogmatic and dictatorial Marx. It was an inconsistency which never seems for a moment to have troubled Bakunin's mind. He could preach unrestrained liberty as a social and political principle, while demanding from his disciples "unconditional obedience" to his own will.¹

There is indeed something repellent and shocking both in the absolutism of the scheme outlined in the *Confession*, and in the frank disingenuousness with which Bakunin appointed one confidential and responsible agent, and then sent another to the same field, without the knowledge of the first, so as to keep all the threads of the conspiracy the more surely in his own hands. But the most astonishing aspect of the whole affair is the element of unreality, of pure fake, inherent in it from the outset. The vast revolutionary enterprise of which the active

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 178.

leadership was forced by Bakunin on the bewildered Arnold (whom, incidentally, he scarcely knew) existed only in the realm of fancy. The central committee "of three or at most five", of which he and Arnold were original members, was never appointed and never functioned. The corresponding organisation which Heimberger was to establish among the Germans was equally abortive. There was a revolutionary movement, or rather a series of such movements, in Bohemia. It is possible that Arnold, and even Heimberger, participated in them. But there is no evidence that they owed anything to Bakunin or recognised him as one of their leaders.¹

Heimberger seems to have possessed more enthusiasm, though perhaps less sense, than Arnold. Unlike Arnold, he was at any rate a satisfactory correspondent. He wrote often, assured Bakunin of the sympathy and admiration which was everywhere felt for him, and promised him a stirring reception if he would only come to Bohemia. Bakunin could not resist this flattery. Early in March 1849 he went to Dresden, shaved off his beard, procured an English passport in the name of Anderson, and proceeded in this guise to Prague. His faithful disciples, the brothers Straka, accompanied or followed him from Leipzig.

The four or five days spent by Bakunin in Prague were full of disillusionment. For though he found "all the necessary elements for a speedy revolution", there was no trace of the organisation which his fancy had created. It was clear—except to Bakunin, who was always blind to failure—that the Czech revolutionaries were, first and foremost, nationalists, and that their hatred of German and Magyar was a far more powerful driving force than their love of democracy. Nor had Bakunin made sufficient allowance for human idiosyncrasies. Arnold was not unnaturally jealous of Heimberger, and sulked at home with an attack of gout. Sabina, who really had a solid following of Czech *bourgeois* nationalists, mistrusted both Heimberger and Arnold. Bakunin found none of the sympathy which Heimberger had promised for his conspiratorial schemes; and he came to the conclusion that "the Prague democrats are great chatterboxes, and more inclined for easy, vainglorious rhetoric than for dangerous enterprises". They chattered to such effect

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 180-81.

that half Prague, including the Austrian police, was soon aware of his presence. After changing his quarters four times in as many days, Bakunin beat a hasty retreat to Dresden, this time leaving the Strakas to look after his interests in the Bohemian capital, and promising, with his usual optimism, to supply them with funds.¹

In his ardour for revolution, Bakunin was like a man whose passion for his mistress is inflamed rather than abated by the discovery of her infidelities. The short-comings of the Czech democrats merely drove him to more furious efforts. In his passage through Dresden on the way to Prague, he had perceived that political life in Dresden was more active and turbulent than in Leipzig. It was moreover nearer the Bohemian frontier. He decided to pitch his headquarters there. A sure instinct drew Michael Bakunin to the scene of prospective maximum disturbance. In Dresden he spent the last tempestuous month of his freedom.

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The pen of another man of genius has preserved a picture of Bakunin on the eve of the climax. On his passage through Dresden on the way to Prague, Bakunin made the acquaintance of August Röckel, the editor of a radical weekly, the *Volksblatt*. Röckel had been until recently one of the conductors of the State Opera—a post from which he had been dismissed for his democratic opinions; and he won Bakunin's heart by his outspoken sympathy for the Slavs. In Röckel's house Bakunin met another of the conductors of the Opera, Richard Wagner. Two things besides revolution still had power to move Bakunin deeply: memories of Premukhino, and music. At their first meeting he told Wagner the story of his life; and on Palm Sunday, April 1st, 1849, he was present in the Opera House when Wagner conducted Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The performance led Bakunin to introduce a reservation into the doctrine of pan-destruction. Going up to congratulate Wagner, he declared that, "should all the music that had ever been written perish in the world conflagration, they must pledge themselves to rescue this symphony, even at the peril of their lives".

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 183-6; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 433-42.

The friendship deepened, and Bakunin became a frequent visitor at Wagner's house. He flattered the composer by inviting him to play over the opening scenes of the *Flying Dutchman*, which he pronounced "stupendously fine". Minna Wagner was shocked by the way in which their guest swallowed meat and sausages in enormous chunks, and gulped down brandy by the glass, rejecting wine as a tasteless beverage. Even Wagner, who was as a rule more easily impressed by himself than by others, was awed into a sense of his own insignificance beside this towering, overwhelming barbarian.

He was in the full bloom of manhood, anywhere between 30 and 40 years of age. Everything about him was colossal, and he was full of a primitive exuberance and strength. I never gathered that he set much store by my acquaintance. Indeed he did not seem to care for merely intellectual men; what he demanded was men of reckless energy. . . . His general mode of discussion was the Socratic method; and he seemed quite at ease when, stretched on his host's hard sofa, he could argue discursively with a crowd of all sorts of men on the problems of revolution. On these occasions he invariably got the best of the argument. It was impossible to triumph against his opinions, stated as they were with the utmost conviction, and overstepping in every direction even the extremest bounds of radicalism.¹

The feverish last weeks of Bakunin's liberty were filled with many such discussions—Poles, Czechs, and Germans succeeding one another, or sometimes combining, to form his audience. He moved rapidly from place to place. First he lodged with Wittig, the editor of the radical *Dresdener Zeitung*, whom he had known since 1842; then with a former Polish general who lived precariously by taking pupils; then with Röckel; then with Andrzejkowicz, the Polish translator of his *Appeal to the Slavs*. He concealed himself, not at all effectively, under a series of aliases, passing himself off at one time as an English clergyman. He frequented not only the obscure cafés and seedy lodgings where democrats congregated, but the *salons* of a Polish countess and a Wallach prince. The prince's interest in revolution was probably platonic. But Bakunin never spurned the amenities of society; and aristocrats were sometimes lenders. Bakunin himself was never far above starvation level; and it

was only the devotion of Röckel, who sold some of his furniture, which enabled him to send money to the Strakas, his emissaries in Prague.

He tried once more to revive his dream of an international revolutionary committee. He fell in with two Poles, Kryzanowski and Heltman, whom he had known in Paris and Brussels. They were now on their way from their native Galicia to Paris to report to the Polish Central Committee. Bakunin charged them with an urgent appeal to the Committee to send Polish delegates, Polish officers, and, above all, Polish money to support the coming revolution in Bohemia. He found a Hungarian general named Bayer, and sent through him a similar appeal to Count Teleki. But these ambitious plans came to nothing. Kryzanowski and Heltman not only returned from Paris empty-handed, but showed a disconcerting readiness to substitute themselves for Bakunin as patrons and directors of the Slav revolution; and a temporary coolness sprang up between him and the two presumptuous Poles.¹

But Bakunin's eyes were still fixed on Prague. Throughout the month of April 1849, agents were passing to and fro between Saxony and Bohemia. The enthusiastic Heimberger returned to Dresden, and was lodged secretly by Bakunin in Röckel's house lest he should divulge the secrets of Prague to his fellow Poles. Then came Gustav Straka, followed by Joseph Frič, the student whom Bakunin had met for the first time at the Prague Congress in the previous year. After the failure of the June insurrection, Frič had organised a small brotherhood of students which seems to have become the most active and extreme revolutionary society in Prague. Bakunin, who had every reason to mistrust Arnold and no confidence in the ability of the Strakas, received Frič with enthusiasm. The idea of a small and select corps of revolutionaries was particularly attractive to him, and Frič was the only one of the Czech democrats for whom he retained a lasting respect. But even Frič could not produce a revolution in Bohemia. The Czech *bourgeoisie* was still divided between the claims of nationalism and democracy; and the mutual jealousies of Frič, Arnold, and Sabina were fatal to Bakunin's ambition. Prague remained ominously quiet. It was Dresden itself which

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 187-90; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 195, 197; Pfitzner, *Bakuninstudien*, p. 146.

witnessed the last convulsions of the expiring German revolution.¹

Plunged in his visionary schemes for a Slav revolution in Bohemia, Bakunin had characteristically ignored what was going on under his nose. He had few acquaintances among the democrats of Saxony. The generous and devoted Röckel quickly became a close friend. But it was Bakunin who involved Röckel in his Slav intrigues, not Röckel who drew him towards the Germans. Through Wittig, Bakunin had ready access to the columns of the *Dresdener Zeitung*; and it was here that he published, during April, both the dissertation on *Russian Conditions* already mentioned, and a manifesto to the Czechs warning them against co-operation with the Russian enemy in Hungary, which he afterwards referred to as his "Second Appeal to the Slavs". But neither these nor other articles in the *Dresdener Zeitung* which have plausibly been attributed to Bakunin's pen or inspiration, display any interest in the struggle between Saxon democracy and the royal power which was just reaching its climax. It is true that Bakunin was present at a meeting on May 1st, 1849, attended by Wittig, by D'Ester, by a delegate of the Frankfurt Assembly, and by the two Poles Kryzanowski and Heltman, to discuss the co-ordination of revolution with Polish assistance throughout Germany. But there is no reason to suppose that this meeting had any influence on the insurrection which broke out two days later in Dresden. On May 3rd, the day when the first barricades were erected and the first shots fired, Bakunin was planning to leave Dresden with his Wallach friend, Prince Ghika, who was bound for Malta. But as usual he had no money, and Ghika, having on this occasion not more than a few thalers to spare, departed alone.²

The issue which led to the Dresden outbreak was not in itself calculated to appeal to Bakunin. The despised National Assembly at Frankfurt had, after months of labour, produced a federal constitution for Germany. The Saxon Diet voted approval of it.

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 450-54; Pfitzner, *Bakuninstudien*, pp. 143-4, 179.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 196-7; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 50-53, 74-80, 417; Pfitzner, *Bakuninstudien*, 113-20, 148-9; Nikolaevsky, *International Review for Social History* (1936), No. 1, pp. 121-216.

The King of Saxony, like the crowned heads of most of the larger German states, would have nothing to do with Frankfurt; and on April 28th, 1849, he dismissed the Diet. Popular clamour grew during the ensuing days. The Saxon army had been weakened by the despatch of a large contingent to Schleswig-Holstein; and when, on May 3rd, barricades began to appear in the streets of Dresden, the Civic Guards went over to the rebels. An attempt was made to rush the Arsenal, which was held by troops. The troops fired on the crowd. There were fifteen dead; and the rebellion was well alight. During the night, the royal family fled to Königstein, the fortress on the Elbe twenty miles upstream from Dresden. Next day a provisional government of three democrats, Tzschirner, Todt, and Heubner, was proclaimed from the balcony of the Town Hall.

The composition of the provisional government gave the clue to the nature of the forces behind the insurrection. Of its three members, only Tzschirner, who had been a vice-president of the Second Chamber, could be reckoned as an extreme radical and possessed some demagogic talent. Heubner and Todt were typical representatives of the *bourgeoisie*—pan-Germans and constitutional reformers. They resented the abuse of the royal prerogative, and the contemptuous rejection of the Frankfurt Constitution. But they were not revolutionaries. They had no social programme, and none of that mystical urge to destroy which inspired Michael Bakunin. The good *bourgeois* of Dresden, in alliance with the proletariat, found themselves in sudden and unexpected occupation of the seat of authority. But they had no notion how to use the power which they had obtained.

Bakunin's first reaction to these proceedings was one of contemptuous indifference. He cared nothing for the cause of German national unity or for the Frankfurt Constitution. He had met Tzschirner at several of the confabulations of the past few weeks, and had no great opinion of him. Todt he knew personally, but had never had political dealings with him. He had never seen Heubner in his life. He had no thought of intervening when, on the morning of May 4th, he happened to meet Richard Wagner in the street. Wagner was on his way to the Town Hall to see what was afoot, and Bakunin joined him. The provisional government had just been proclaimed, and Tzschirner was haranguing an enthusiastic crowd. Nature was too

strong for Bakunin's good intentions. The scent of revolution was in the air, and he was carried away by the prevailing fever. His enthusiasm was tempered only by pity for leaders who so obviously did not know how to lead. He thrust his way into the Town Hall, and began to offer advice to the provisional government on the conduct of revolution.¹

The advice, so far as it is recorded, was sound. The Saxon authorities, having insufficient troops at their disposal to cope with the rebellion, had wisely refrained from any offensive, and had applied to Prussia for reinforcements. There could be no doubt that these would be sent. Bakunin assured Tzschirner and his companions that the fate of the insurrection would be settled not by speeches and parleyings, but by cannons and muskets; and he begged them to devote all their energies to the organisation of the military forces at their disposal. These had been placed under the command of a nondescript adventurer named Heinze, who had been a colonel in the Greek army. Bakunin had no confidence in Heinze. He had a well-founded belief that Poles were the only revolutionaries equipped with the qualifications for military command, and he went out into the town to scour the clubs and cafés for Polish officers. His search proved for some time fruitless. It was only on the following morning, May 5th, that he reappeared at the Town Hall with Heltman, who had seen service both in the Prussian and in the Polish armies, and the inseparable Kryzanowski, whose military qualifications were more dubious. The three established themselves at a table in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall, with a map of Dresden in front of them, in the capacity of military advisers to the provisional government. The cautious Poles had stipulated that they should be provided with money and passports "in case events should take a bad turn".²

This prudence was not untimely. On the same evening, the first Prussian troops arrived on the outskirts of Dresden. The tearing up of the railway line delayed their arrival by some hours. The military advisers carefully marked on their map the disposition of the few cannon which were in the hands of the insurgents. But the plans of the defence do not seem to have got much further than this. The story that Bakunin proposed to

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 199-200; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 49, 53.

² *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 54-6.

hang the Sistine Madonna on the barricades, on the ground that the Prussians were "too cultured to fire on Raphael", belongs to the world of picturesque legend. Inevitable jealousies broke out between the military advisers and the commander-in-chief, and the commander-in-chief refused men for operations recommended by the advisers. In his *Confession* Bakunin roundly asserts that Heinze was a traitor, and expresses astonishment that he should afterwards have been condemned and imprisoned by the Saxon Government. In such an atmosphere, a desperate situation became more desperate still.¹

On Sunday, May 6th, it was clear to any detached observer that the cause was lost. The two Poles drew the appropriate conclusion, took their money and passports and departed. Tzschirner and Todt vanished from the Town Hall about the same time; and though they subsequently reappeared, the morale of the provisional government had suffered a severe shock. Defeat was in the air. Only Heubner remained equal to the occasion, and fearlessly made the round of the barricades, haranguing and encouraging the defenders. Bakunin accompanied him, but refrained perforce from speech-making. He had already shouted himself hoarse.²

There is no manner of doubt that on May 6th, or on either of the two succeeding days, Bakunin could have saved himself by flight. He had been involved, accidentally and almost involuntarily, in an insurrection which he had neither planned nor approved, whose objectives did not interest him, and in the success of which he had never believed. He had played no official rôle in it, and was under no obligation to anyone connected with it. Why then did he remain to face almost certain capture? The answer which he gives in the *Confession* is palpably sincere. He remained because he could not bring himself to leave Heubner in the lurch. Heubner, virtually deserted by Todt and Tzschirner, was like "a lamb led to the slaughter". The Dresden insurrection was no more his work than it was the work of Bakunin himself. This clash of arms was as much too serious for Heubner, the sentimental constitutional liberal, as it was too trivial for Bakunin, the apostle of universal destruction. But once in it,

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 202; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 56; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiv. 425.

² *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 57-9.

and once committed to the brave defenders of the barricades, Heubner would not desert his post; and Bakunin would not desert him. There were moments when Bakunin rose to pure quixotism. He risked death—and sacrificed more than ten years of his life—not for the Slav revolution, not even for the insurgent *bourgeoisie* of Dresden, but for one whom he had known scarcely a week, whose temperament and convictions were alien to him, but whose heroism had kindled his admiration and whose helplessness had touched his heart.¹

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The events of the last days of the insurrection were so many successive steps towards a foregone conclusion. Bakunin found himself the leader of a forlorn hope; and during this time he “neither slept, nor ate, nor drank, nor even smoked”. On May 6th the insurgents had set fire to the Opera House, where Bakunin a few weeks before had heard the Ninth Symphony conducted by Wagner. The fire spread to a wing of the neighbouring Zwinger, destroying the natural history collection which was housed there. There is no proof of Bakunin’s personal responsibility for this act. But afterwards, when the authorities were eager to stir up prejudice against the foreign agitator, a plot to burn down the city was fathered on him. Saxon and Prussian troops penetrated slowly but surely into the town. On May 8th Heinze was taken prisoner. He was perhaps fortunate; for as the hand-to-hand fighting grew keener and more bitter, no quarter was given, and captured insurgents were shot on the spot or thrown into the Elbe. Organised resistance was soon at an end, and Bakunin proposed that the survivors should use their remaining store of powder to blow up the Town Hall and themselves in it. On the same night a general retreat was ordered, and an announcement made that the provisional government was withdrawing to Freiberg, twenty-five miles away, which was Heubner’s home. In the early hours of the morning of May 9th the leaders slipped quietly away from the city.²

Later in the day Wagner, who had left Dresden while the insurrection was at its height, met Bakunin, Heubner, and a postal official named Martin toiling towards Freiberg in a hired

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 202-3.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 203-5; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 58-63.

carriage. Wagner assured them that all was not yet lost. In Chemnitz, where there was a large industrial population, everyone was on their side, and the insurrection could be continued there. It seemed too good to be true. But they were in a mood to clutch at every straw; and after a brief rest at Freiberg, where the irrepressible Bakunin harangued Heubner and Wagner on the futility of all forms of government, they decided to press on to Chemnitz. Wagner hurriedly left with his wife for Weimar, and thence for Switzerland.¹

Bakunin's worldly possessions consisted at this moment of several seals of the provisional government, some 13 thalers in cash, and a mass of compromising correspondence. His comrades were no better equipped. Despair, rather than any considered plan, brought them to Chemnitz; and their last hope—the industrial proletariat—failed them. Not a sound of revolution was heard in the town. But the mayor was taking no chances. During the night of May 9th–10th, 1849, Bakunin, Heubner, and several other potential disturbers of the peace were arrested in their beds. No special precautions were taken or force used; and Bakunin afterwards reflected how easily he might have torn himself away from his captors. But he was worn out, physically and morally, by the superhuman exertions of the past week. He wanted only to sleep, and it did not seem to matter what happened next. He let himself be taken without resistance.²

¹ Wagner, *My Life*, pp. 493-6; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 59.

² *Sobranie*, iv. 205; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 683; Wagner, *My Life*, p. 499.

BOOK III

BURIED ALIVE

“There is nothing more hopeless than to be compelled to remain eternally with oneself. . . . Man can only *be* something in the society of others and with the help of others.”

BAKUNIN to Matilda Lindenberg (*née* Reichel)
(Spring 1850)

CHAPTER 16

SAXONY, AUSTRIA

BAKUNIN and Heubner, together with the other prisoners, were handed over to the nearest garrison at Altenburg. The Saxon authorities, apprised by telegraph, sent a sergeant and six men to fetch them; and by the afternoon of May 10th, 1849, the captives were back in Dresden. They were lodged for a fortnight in the old city prison. But the number of those taken in the insurrection so taxed the accommodation that even an important prisoner like Bakunin could not be isolated; and at one moment he shared a cell with an Austrian democrat named Kürnberger, to whom he complained that the Fourth Estate (*i.e.* the proletariat) had been deceived and betrayed by the Third (*i.e.* the bourgeoisie). These haphazard arrangements did not, however, long satisfy the authorities. Before the end of May Bakunin and other ringleaders were transferred to the cavalry barracks outside the town.¹

But even the cavalry barracks were unsuitable for the prolonged detention of dangerous political prisoners. Despite the vigilance of the guards, there were too many chances of surreptitious communication with sympathisers in the town. The enquiry which had been opened would evidently drag on for months, and some safer and more permanent quarters must be found. On the night of August 28th–29th Bakunin, Heubner, and Röckel were removed in fetters, shortly after midnight, from Dresden. Each was placed in a separate carriage with two armed guards, and a detachment of cavalry accompanied them through the city. Nothing occurred to justify these extraordinary precautions, and shortly before 6 A.M. the prisoners were securely lodged in the rock fortress of Königstein—the refuge of the King during the anxious days of the insurrection. Here were passed the last nine months which Bakunin would ever spend on German soil.²

¹ Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, pp. 196-7; Nikolaevsky, *Katorga i Ssylka* (1930), Nos. 8-9, pp. 113, 120.

² *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 70; Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, p. 197; Nikolaevsky, *Katorga i Ssylka* (1930), Nos. 8-9, p. 107.

The material conditions at Königstein were better than at any other period of his long captivity. He had a clear, warm, light room; and—advantage rarely enjoyed by inmates of fortresses—he could see through his window the open sky. He could take daily exercise in the ample fortress grounds and, from this commanding height, admire the picturesque beauties of the “Saxon Switzerland”. On these walks he was chained to two soldiers with fixed bayonets. As escape from Königstein was a sheer impossibility, the chain seemed a refinement of precaution. Perhaps, Bakunin bitterly suggested, it was a symbol to remind him in his isolation of the unseen link which bound every individual to mankind as a whole. For the rest, he was humanely treated, and had “everything that a reasonable man could desire”. He could smoke as much as he liked; during one month 1600 cigars were supplied to him. He could get books—though the adjutant was supposed to examine every page of them, as they entered or left the fortress, for hidden codes. He could receive and write letters, though there were sometimes interminable delays, and he felt like a girl of fifteen whose correspondence is scanned by anxious parents for the protection of her innocence.

For these luxuries of prison life Bakunin depended on the devotion of his friends. He had now more need than ever to ply them with appeals for funds. There was a ready response from Adolf Reichel and his sister Matilda, who were his most regular correspondents, and from Alexander Herzen. Emma Herwegh sent 100 francs. Franz Otto, the lawyer nominated by the Saxon authorities to look after Bakunin’s defence, acted as treasurer, and purchased books, cigars, and minor necessities; and when funds were not available from any other source, he paid out of his own pocket. Indeed, Bakunin found himself in the singular position of “a client who is paid by his advocate”. The democrats of Koethen and of Leipzig contributed handsomely but remained anonymous. On the other hand, Count Skorzewski replied evasively, and provoked ironical comment on “Polish steadfastness and gratitude”. It seemed odd that one whose chief aim had been to restore Poland and to break up Germany should be indebted mainly to Germans in his time of need.¹

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 353-87; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, v. 291, 296.

A thick bundle of yellowing octavo exercise paper covered in Bakunin's close but legible hand, which is still preserved in the archives of the Ministry of War at Prague, bears witness to his aimless industry during the autumn of 1849. One of his first requests from Königstein had been for an English dictionary, grammar, and text-book; and his creditable efforts at English composition can still be read. But as time went on mathematics proved a more effective narcotic than English. Page after page is covered with algebraical and trigonometrical exercises. He invented and illustrated a new system of "multiplying decimals and continued fractions without unnecessary use of the multiplication table". Interspersed between these entries are the fragments of a diary in which he records his reading, the rare events of his life, the state of his health (in November he consulted a doctor for constipation), and, more rarely, the state of his feelings. Among the books supplied to him at this time were Shakespeare in Schlegel's translation (he notes the reading of *Romeo and Juliet*), *Don Quixote*, and the poems of Wieland. Then he turned to French history, and ordered the four volumes of Thiers' *Consulate* and the histories of Guizot and Lamartine, varying this solid fare with memoirs and books of travel.¹

But mathematics and history were a poor substitute for life. Bakunin had never professed to be a man of learning. This determined, but half-hearted, devotion to knowledge was no more than a manful attempt to break the endless flow of thought, to save himself from listening eternally for the fifteen-minute strike of the fortress clock and the lights-out bugle at half-past nine—his only, and unnecessary, time-keepers. Thought was the one thing at Königstein which was free and unregulated; and his thought "roamed all over the world" until he fell asleep. But that was not life. In bitter mockery of Descartes' famous aphorism, Bakunin described himself as "only a thinking, *i.e.* not a living, creature". Sometimes he fell into blank despair and declared that there was "not a being in the world whom he loved and to whom he was necessary". He was utterly cut off. The sense of isolation was aggravated by torturing ignorance of all that was happening in the world outside—the world which was still so near, and where, a few months ago, he had played a conspicuous

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 353-61; unpublished original papers and diary in the Bakunin dossier in the Archives of the Ministry of War, Prague.

part. The authorities were deaf to his insistent petitions on this point. The ban on newspapers published since his arrest was absolute; and he had to be grateful when Otto sent him an old file of the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* for the first quarter of 1848.¹

His growing apathy extended even to the conduct of his own defence. The preliminary interrogation, begun in Dresden within a few days of his arrest, was resumed before a large commission on his arrival at Königstein. It was conducted with true German thoroughness. It ignored no ascertained incident in the culprit's life of the past two years, and neglected no person in whose society he was known, or suspected, to have been. It did not omit to enquire into such questions as whether he had, on a certain date during the insurrection, taken a certain Herr Pfotenhauer, a Town Councillor, by the collar and thrown him out of the Town Hall—an incident which the accused admitted to have been possible, but failed to recollect. One witness testified that the prisoner had been heard inciting the rebels at the barricades to violence; another that, when warned of the danger that private houses might be blown up, he had replied decisively "Then let them go up!" Many of the charges Bakunin categorically denied. Other questions he refused to answer on the ground that he could not compromise his associates. But there was a body of damning evidence which he could not hope to controvert. He did not complain. These long duels with the commission were at any rate a relief from solitude. After the final session on October 20th, he wrote in his diary that he had been "really touched on bidding farewell to the commission, which has been full of humanity to me".²

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Four days later the indictment was formally communicated to the advocate of the accused, who was given three weeks for the preparation of a written defence. But the long interrogation had exhausted Bakunin's interest. He could not concentrate on the work. He made a pretext of the refusal to supply him with newspapers, and on November 12th, the eve of the expiry of the

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 358, 371, 397.

² *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 39-69, 108-84; unpublished diary in the Bakunin dossier in the Archives of the Ministry of War, Prague.

three weeks' limit, wrote to Otto that he must "renounce the idea of writing his own defence". The faithful Otto obtained a fortnight's extension, set to work, and on November 26th handed in a defence of his own. It was based mainly on legal grounds. It argued that the accused, not being a Saxon subject, could not be guilty of treason, and that the maximum penalty to which he was liable under the code, should he be found guilty, was from two to four years' imprisonment. But the case was hopeless from the start. On January 14th, 1850, the court found Bakunin, Heubner, and Röckel guilty and sentenced them to death.¹

All three accused availed themselves of the right to appeal. This time Bakunin, though still convinced of the futility of attempting to defend himself before a "closed court", took up his pen and plunged into a long "political confession" addressed to Otto and designed to guide him in the drafting of the appeal. But Bakunin, remote as ever from current realities, betrayed no consciousness of the fate which hung over him and no interest in the formal proceedings of which he was the subject. As he wrote, the letter grew to the dimensions of a treatise. He forgot the prison and the indictment and the sentence, and resumed his normal rôle of political propagandist. He reviewed the state of Russia from the days of Peter the Great to the present time, and predicted the coming of a peasant revolution. Russia, he declared, as the sworn enemy of liberty, had found a natural ally in Austria. He embarked on an analysis of the racial composition of the Austrian Empire, which was evidently intended to lead up to the familiar doctrine that the break-up of Austria, like the overthrow of Tsardom, was a necessary condition of the triumph of freedom. But the conclusion was never reached. Having expended more than 20,000 words on the theme, Bakunin abandoned it; and the *Political Confession* remains, like so many products of his pen, an unfinished fragment—perhaps the most curious appeal ever written by a man under sentence of death. Otto soon abandoned hope of obtaining any guidance from his eccentric client, and himself handed in an appeal which repeated the arguments of the original defence. But the result was not affected. On April 6th, when Bakunin had been for ten

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 287-302; Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, pp. 203-5, 220.

months in custody, the appeal was dismissed and the sentence confirmed.¹

Bakunin's dominant mood during these months was one of slow, gnawing depression. He felt more and more the loss of all human contacts. Matilda Reichel, whom he had last seen in Paris two years ago, and who was now married, wrote that she had "lived through all his sufferings with him", and offered the consolations of religion. Johanna Pescantini sent him, through Matilda, a New Testament which had belonged to her dead child, and the poems of Byron; and these gifts were followed by a diary, a pipe, and a gold pin. But Matilda was no doubt right in thinking that he received her ministrations with a "wry smile of compassion"; and when, at the end of April, she came to Dresden specially in order to see him, it was she, not he, who was bitterly disappointed at the refusal of the authorities to allow the visit.

He did not fear death. They had assured him from the first that the death sentence, even if pronounced, would not be carried into effect. In none of the German states had the authorities, since the outbreak of the revolution, yet ventured to execute a political prisoner. He felt that he would a thousand times have preferred death to "sitting in solitude and idleness, useless behind prison bars". But one thing above all he dreaded: that he would be handed over to Russia. There he could expect no mercy. If he must suffer humiliation, let it be among strangers, not among his own people. He constantly pestered Otto on this point; and the kindly advocate assured him that "what you particularly feared will, according to all I hear, certainly not occur".²

The danger was, however, real enough. Both Austria and Russia had displayed a lively interest in Bakunin's arrest; and both, before many weeks had elapsed, handed in formal demands to the Saxon Government for his surrender. These demands were far from unwelcome to the Saxon authorities, who did not desire to incur the odium of executing Bakunin or the responsibility of keeping him indefinitely in one of their prisons. It only remained to choose between the two claimants. Russia might seem at first sight to have a prior right; for the prisoner

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 222-87, 303-52; Pfitzner, *Bakunistudien*, pp. 205-6.

² *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 353-410.

was a Russian, and he had been condemned in Russia as long ago as 1844. But Austria's interest was more immediate. Bakunin's recent activities had been aimed more directly against Austria than against Russia; and a commission was at this moment sitting in Prague to investigate the Prague disturbances which he had helped to foment. The embarrassment was, however, short-lived. The Tsar graciously consented that the criminal should first be handed over to Austria, on the understanding that the latter, when her purposes had been served, would in turn pass him on to Russia. This diplomatic bargain had already been struck within two months of Bakunin's arrest; and it was known to all concerned, except, of course, to Bakunin himself, that as soon as the legal proceedings had run their course and Saxon honour had been satisfied, he would be placed at the disposal of Austria as a preliminary to his eventual surrender to the authorities of his native land.¹

The ghastly process must, however, first be carried to its appointed end. On June 6th, 1850, thirteen months after Bakunin's arrest, the King allowed himself the luxury of an act of clemency. The sentence on all three prisoners was commuted to one of "imprisonment for life of the second degree". But the reprieve was not communicated to them; and when, during the night of June 12th-13th, Bakunin was wakened and ordered to dress, he believed that he was being led out to execution. He was left to discover, from the closed carriage in which he was placed and from the length of the journey, that he had nothing worse to expect than a change in the place of his confinement. It was only when the party reached the frontier that he learned that his destination was Austria. Bakunin had been allowed to take nothing with him; and the last appearance in our records of the friendly Otto is a letter written by him a month later to the court in Dresden asking permission to send on to his former client "at least a part" of his underwear and clothing, of which he was in "extreme need".²

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The journey was completed in less than twenty-four hours; and on the evening of June 14th, 1850, Bakunin was lodged

¹ Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, pp. 207-9; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 480-81.

² Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, pp. 206, 211; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 363-4.

in the Hradčín, the hill citadel of Prague. His cell was in the converted monastery of St. George, where Gustav Straka and Arnold were also housed. The cell was on the first floor. Its heavily barred window looked on to the monastery garden where a sentry stood permanently on guard; but a wooden plank disposed slantwise beneath the sill prevented the occupant from enjoying even this grim prospect. A commission which inspected the cell soon after Bakunin's arrival scanned even the chimney with suspicion and ordered it to be fitted with an iron grating. During the winter additional precautions were imposed. The padlock on the door of the cell was fitted with two separate keys which were in the possession of different officials. The cell was never to be opened except in the presence of six armed men; and the prisoner's daily exercise, "if he urgently desired it", was strictly limited to half an hour and to a particular corridor. Every quarter of an hour, day and night, the guard was to look through the peep-hole in the door to see that all was well. Such was the fear which the fettered Bakunin inspired in the Austrian official mind.

In other respects, too, a new rigour replaced the comparative amenities of Königstein. Bakunin was now no longer a civil prisoner as in Saxony. He was under martial law; and the change of status was reflected both in his legal rights and in the treatment applied to him. He no longer had a legal representative to defend his interests, and he was no longer allowed to write or receive letters. He was fortunate, however, in finding a friendly successor to the worthy Otto. Captain-Auditor Franz, who had been placed in charge of the case, was touched by the prisoner's helplessness and conducted his correspondence on his behalf. "I have never ceased even in the criminal to respect the man," wrote Franz sententiously to Herwegh, who had sent 25 thalers, "and omit nothing in his interest which is compatible with my duty." But Franz, like Otto, had to suffer from the amiable idiosyncrasies of his protégé. Contrary to Franz's "well-intentioned advice", Bakunin spent the greater part of the 25 thalers on expensive mathematical books, with the result that he was soon without his favourite cigars, and even had to go hungry; for the prison fare failed to satisfy his still abnormal appetite. His clothing was in rags. His "most ardent wish", reported Franz, was to get a night-shirt made for him, "since only miser-

able fragments remain of his old one". Franz received further subsidies from Herzen, from Otto, and from the democrats of Dessau. When Bakunin finally left Prague, the funds in hand amounted to 85 thalers and 55 Austrian florins—a sum which testifies to the generosity of his friends and, perhaps, to a strict censorship on his purchases.

The judicial procedure was still more dilatory in Austrian military, than in Saxon civilian, hands. There was a brief interrogation on the day after Bakunin's arrival in Prague. Then for nine long months he was left entirely in peace, the policy being to obtain confessions from accomplices before resuming the cross-examination of the major criminal. It was not until March 1851 that the monotonous tenor of the prisoner's existence was suddenly interrupted. On March 13th, 1851, as the result of fresh, though groundless, rumours of an imminent attempt at rescue, the decision was hastily taken to move Bakunin from Prague to the Moravian fortress of Olmütz. It was executed on the same night with such precipitancy that, when the convoy arrived next morning in Olmütz, the commandant of the fortress had not yet been warned of the important guest whom he was to entertain. At Olmütz the conditions of Bakunin's confinement differed from those of Prague in only two material particulars. He was not only fettered but chained to the wall of his cell; and the commandant so far took pity on his appetite as to order double rations to be served to him.¹

The transfer to Olmütz had the effect of recalling Bakunin's existence to the notice of the highest authorities. While the bureaucrats of the Ministry of War were still loading their dossiers, the Imperial Cabinet, mindful that the Tsar was clamouring for his promised victim, issued peremptory instructions to proceed with the case. The result was an intensive interrogation before a commission presided over by Franz. Between April 15th and 18th, 1851, more than 150 questions were put to Bakunin, and his answers recorded in a protocol. The questions bore almost exclusively on his unsuccessful efforts to fan the flames of rebellion in Prague and on his relations with the Czech revolutionaries. Bakunin declared at the outset, and repeated on several occasions during the interrogation, that it was contrary to his principles to answer questions which might

¹ Pfitzner, *Bakuninstudien*, pp. 212-17; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 365.

incriminate his friends. But it soon turned out, from the depositions of the other prisoners which were presented to him, that they had already sufficiently compromised themselves. Since all, or nearly all, was known, Bakunin could make a virtue of frankness. He spoke far more openly than he had done at Dresden or Königstein, retracting many of his previous denials. He no longer had anything to lose by confession. In Saxony he had had some vestiges of a defence; it was possible to quibble about his share in the Dresden insurrection. In Austria he had none whatever. His *Appeal to the Slavs* was one long plea for the disappearance of Austria from the map of Europe. Had there been no other shred of evidence against him, his condemnation was certain. It could not be made more certain by the frankest avowals.

Bakunin's attitude made a favourable impression on the commission. There was no defence, and he knew it. He achieved a certain measure of detachment from the whole business. When, at the end of the interrogation, he was asked whether he had anything to add, his only request was that a trunk containing clothing which he had left in Andrzejkowicz's flat in Dresden, and the books which he had had with him in Königstein, might be returned to him. Finally, the following declaration was inserted in the protocol:

In the course of the present enquiry Michael Bakunin has repeatedly declared:

(1) that after his surrender to the Austrian authorities he took the firm decision to make no statements and answer no questions, that only the attitude adopted towards him by the officer conducting the enquiry induced him to give evidence, and that if the officer were changed he would make no further statements;

(2) that he is aware that measures of compulsion may be applied to him, but that this application will merely result in his complete silence.

In general, he has behaved with courage and decision, but with perfect propriety.

And the interrogation ended with these curious tributes by the prisoner to the president of the court and by the court to the prisoner.¹

When May 10th came, Bakunin had been cut off from the

¹ Pfützner, *Bakunistudien*, pp. 217-18; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 414-62.

world for two years, thirteen months in Saxon, and eleven in Austrian, prisons. It is not surprising that he complained of "pains in the body", and that the commandant of the fortress found him "brooding and shut up in himself". The maintenance of his abnormal appetite shows to what extent his powerful constitution had resisted the strain of long and rigorous confinement with its grudging daily half-hour of supervised exercise. The demand for mathematical books is a proof that his mind still retained sufficient vitality to respond to this exacting narcotic. But these remarkable symptoms could not conceal the slow physical and mental deterioration which expressed itself in apathy and listlessness. Bakunin had ceased to struggle. The one weapon left to him was obstinate silence. He had lost hope, he had almost lost desire. The ragged prisoner chained to the wall in Olmütz retained his human dignity, and a semblance of his human shape. But it was a far cry from this tormented wreck of a man to the young giant who had cheered the rebels to resistance on the Dresden barricades in the May days of 1849.¹

The fifth day after this gloomy second anniversary at last marked a decisive stage in Bakunin's Odyssey. The military court appointed to try the accused met on May 15th, 1851. Captain-Auditor Franz submitted to it a report which constituted the indictment, and which was based almost exclusively on the prisoner's own admissions. The case was clear. The court unanimously found Bakunin guilty of high treason, and condemned him to death by hanging. By a touch of grim humour, he was condemned to pay the costs of the enquiry; but no mention was made of the cost of the rope. On the same day, immediately after the promulgation of the sentence, it was commuted by the commander-in-chief to one of strict imprisonment for life.²

But this was not the last event of this crowded twenty-four hours—so violent a contrast to the empty, waiting months which had gone before. It had been decided some weeks in advance that "this dangerous personage" should, by way of precaution, be handed over to Russia on the very day when the sentence on him was pronounced. On the same night Bakunin

¹ Pfitzner, *Bakunistudien*, pp. 216-17.

² *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 59-94.

was removed from Olmütz under the guard of an officer and eight men and conveyed, first by special train, later by road, towards the Russian border. Cracow, the last Austrian town, was reached at 10 P.M. on May 16th. Then, after a short rest, the convoy set forth again and by two o'clock in the morning was on the frontier. Here a body of six Russian gendarmes and twenty Cossacks awaited the captive. They had been waiting for seven weeks. So great was the impatience of the Russian, and the dilatoriness of the Austrian, Governments.

The darkness and desolation of a Galician frontier post was an appropriate setting for this ghoulisn scene. The Austrian fetters were removed from the prisoner (the Austrians, Bakunin said afterwards, were too mean to make him a present of them) and fetters of the heavier Russian pattern fitted. Much as Bakunin had dreaded what was now happening, the event was accompanied by a feeling almost of exhilaration. After the intolerable confined monotony of the past months, any movement, any variation brought a sense of physical relief; and Bakunin could not repress an impulse of sentimental self-indulgence as he stood once more, after a lapse of eleven years, on the soil of his native land and among men who spoke his native tongue. "Well, boys," he exclaimed (the account comes from Natalie Ogarev, to whom he told the story twelve years later), "it is good to be back in one's own country—if only to die there." To which the unemotional officer in charge retorted: "Conversation is prohibited".¹

The journey which lay before them was slow and lasted nearly a week; for Russia at this time had no railway communication with Western Europe. The mutual fears of the captive and of his gaolers proved groundless. There was nothing in Bakunin's present demeanour to justify the official legend of a wild beast in human guise seeking whom he might devour; and the gendarmes failed to display those qualities of petty tyranny and brutality which revolutionaries attributed to all agents of the Tsar. It was reported from Warsaw that the prisoner, "contrary to expectation, conducted himself very quietly and politely" and "seemed completely resigned to his fate"; and Bakunin afterwards wrote, in his *Confession* to the Tsar, of the "humane,

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 487; Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, p. 219; Tuchkova-Ogareva, *Vospominaniya*, p. 308.

indulgent treatment", so contrary to his "fearful expectations", which was meted out to him by his guards. On May 11th, 1851 (time having moved back twelve days to meet the Russian calendar), the party reached Petersburg, and Bakunin was deposited in a cell of the Peter-and-Paul fortress.¹

The vivid personality of Michael Bakunin had so impressed itself on the consciousness of Europe that the shades of the prison-house could not altogether eclipse it. "Bakunin", wrote the *Dresdener Zeitung* while he was still in Königstein, "seems to be becoming a regular myth." The process of myth-making went on apace during the succeeding months. At one moment his execution was announced as imminent. At another, "Russian *carbonari*" with the aid of Hungary were plotting his escape; and high-born ladies all over Europe were contributing to secret funds for an attempt at rescue. He was flogged after each interrogation before the Austrian court for refusing to compromise his friends. At Prague he carried out a fortnight's hunger strike in the hope of ending his life, and desisted from the attempt only when he was given the novels of Paul de Kock to read. At Olmütz he attempted suicide by swallowing sulphur matches; but the poison had no effect on his iron constitution. Such were some of the stories in circulation at this time.²

But when, in May 1851, Bakunin was swallowed up into the remote and silent fastnesses of Russia, his memory gradually faded from the European scene. At first, rumour continued from time to time to play with his name—even the ugly rumour that he was a Russian spy and that, far from languishing in a Russian fortress, he was even now serving the Tsar in some fresh field. But recollections soon grew faint. Bakunin lived on, as one who is dead, only in the memories of a few friends. A dark curtain had fallen on that wild, melodramatic, broken career. And for ten years nobody expected to see it rise on another act.

¹ Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, p. 219; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 100.

² Pfützner, *Bakuninstudien*, pp. 213, 215, 219; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, vii. 473; Tuchkova-Ogareva, *Vospominaniya*, p. 306.

CHAPTER 17

RUSSIA

IN Saxony and Austria, Bakunin had been treated as an accused person and tried and convicted by the oppressive, but formally correct, processes of the law. In Russia, his status was quite different. There he had been tried and sentenced in his absence, as long ago as 1844, to the loss of all rights and to hard labour in Siberia. He crossed the Russian frontier as a condemned criminal. This suffices to explain why the Peter-and-Paul fortress witnessed no repetition of the judicial farce which had been played out in Königstein and in Olmütz. There was no place here for further trial or evidence. It only remained to apply an existing sentence. There was, however, no immediate intention of despatching Bakunin to Siberia. The will of the Tsar was above all law; and Nicholas I frequently preferred to regard important offences against the State as a personal issue between himself and the criminal. Bakunin was deposited in the fortress for an indefinite period to await the Imperial pleasure.

For two months nothing happened, though the delay is more probably attributable to indecision or to other preoccupations on the part of the Tsar than to any deliberate policy of keeping the victim on tenterhooks. Then, one day in July 1851, Count Orlov, principal aide-de-camp to the Tsar, appeared in the cell. He came with a message from his Imperial master, the ingratiating tone of which was a calculated contrast to the sternness which the prisoner might have expected. Having assured Bakunin that the death penalty did not exist in Russia and that he had therefore nothing to fear for his life, he invited him to write for the Tsar "a full confession of all his sins". He was to write not as a criminal confronting his judge, but as if he were speaking with his spiritual father.¹

There is no reason to suppose that Bakunin had any compunction about complying with this request. A quarter of a century later, when revolution in Russia had become a game

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 100-101, 206; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 70-71.

with rules of its own, it was a matter of principle among good revolutionaries, when arrested, to refuse all information regarding their own or their comrades' activities. But it would be an anachronism to suppose that Bakunin was conscious of any such rule of conduct, or that Orlov's invitation caused any struggle in his mind between principle and opportunism. For two years he had been idle, or occupied in killing time with work which no eye but his own would read. Here at length a task was required of him which was congenial in itself and which might, by his manner of performing it, influence his fate. Even his vanity was not untouched. It flattered him that such an invitation should be conveyed to him from such a source and in terms so mild, so almost deferential. It flattered him as an author (for Bakunin was conscious of the high quality of his literary talents) that he should be asked to prepare an *apologia pro vita sua* for the Imperial eye. It was at any rate a welcome change from those interminably petty Saxon and Austrian interrogatories. Bakunin sat down to write. In two months he had completed and forwarded to the Tsar a carefully written *Confession* of some 30,000 words; and though he professes in more than one passage to have found the task difficult, the relish with which he wrote is evident in every page. For clarity and vigour of expression it ranks among the best of his compositions.

Bakunin's *Confession*, first given to the world in 1921, just seventy years after it was written, is a curious historical document. The writer begins with the proud declaration that, although all is lost, honour is still intact and that he will never betray, by naming them, any of those who have confided in him. There follows a detailed and substantially accurate (though not in all respects complete) narrative of his activities from the time of his departure from Petersburg in June 1840 to that of his arrest in Dresden in May 1849. It is couched in terms of abject penitence. Bakunin confesses that he has merited the sternest penalties known to Russian law—even corporal punishment. His thoughts and actions have been "in the highest degree ridiculous, senseless, presumptuous, and criminal—criminal against YOU, my EMPEROR, criminal against RUSSIA, my country, criminal against all laws, political and moral, divine and human". Formerly, he stifled the voice of conscience which warned him of the wickedness of his ways. Now he can

only be thankful that his arrest has brought to an end, before more harm could be done, his "idle, useless, and criminal career". He stands before Nicholas "as a prodigal, estranged, and perverted son before an insulted and angry father"; and he signs his name at the end of the *Confession* "the repentant sinner, Michael Bakunin".

But the subtlest and most insistent *leitmotiv* of the *Confession* is Bakunin's detestation of the German and devotion to the Slav. Here at any rate was a theme well calculated to find favour in the eyes of the Russian Tsar. The Germans are geyed unmercifully and at every opportunity. "What", asks Bakunin almost at the outset, "can be more pitiable, more ridiculous, than a German professor, or indeed than any German?" The flail of his contempt sweeps even more widely:

In Western Europe, wherever you turn you see everywhere decay, weakness, unbelief, and the moral perversion which comes from unbelief. . . . Culture has become a synonym for perversion of mind and heart, a synonym for impotence; and amid this universal corruption only the rude, unenlightened mass called the populace has preserved its freshness and strength, not indeed in Germany, but in France.

Even the German democrats, while professing liberty at home, grudged the liberty of the Slavs of Posen or Bohemia and the Danes of Schleswig-Holstein. In the course of his wanderings, the Germans had become so hateful to Bakunin that he "could not speak patiently to a single one of them, could not listen to the German language or to a German voice"; and he recollected that once, when a German beggar came up to him to solicit alms, he refrained with difficulty from boxing his ears.

These elaborate professions of Teutophobia are balanced by a flaming Slav patriotism. Even when he appeared to be allying himself with Prussia against Russia, he knew well that "the moment the Germans dared to set foot on Slav soil, he would become their implacable enemy". The vocation of the Slavs was "to renew the decadent Western world". Bakunin's desideratum was the "final liberation of all the Slav tribes from the foreign yoke". Into the free federation of Slavs, the Magyars, the Wallachs, and even perhaps the Greeks would enter; and there would be founded, to confront decadent Western civilisation, a great free Eastern State with its capital at Constantinople. It was true that Bakunin's plans included a

Russian revolution and the overthrow of the Tsar. But these visions of future Slav greatness at least showed that his Russian heart was in the right place.¹

The *Confession* must remain an insoluble puzzle to anyone who believes it possible, by analysing a given action, to resolve it into a single motive or coherent set of motives. The simplest hypothesis is no doubt to regard the *Confession* as a masterpiece of hypocrisy, designed to throw dust in the eyes of Nicholas and to induce him to alleviate the prisoner's lot. Such a motive is, indeed, apparent in many of its pages. But it is, for several reasons, an inadequate explanation of the whole. There are in the *Confession* phrases of disarming frankness which are a direct contradiction of any such view. Bakunin's generous tribute to the revolutionary zeal of the French workers in the days of 1848 was as unlikely to please Nicholas as his bold declaration that many of the evils of Russia are due to the absence of a free public opinion. Even where he humbly traces back his errors to "the disease of philosophy", he candidly doubts whether he has yet "completely recovered from it". Most of all, the thrice-repeated declaration that he will not disclose the names of his associates was perhaps a sop to his own pride—an excuse given to himself for having consented to write. But it was read by Nicholas—and could scarcely have been read otherwise—as a gesture of defiance.

Other considerations are equally fatal to the hypothesis of an elaborate and calculated mystification. Sustained hypocrisy was a gift beyond the scope of Bakunin's character. In his long and varied career he frequently deceived others, but seldom until he had first deceived himself. Moreover his own subsequent admissions seem conclusive. He wrote to Herzen from Siberia that he had described to Nicholas "with some omissions, my whole life abroad, my designs, my impressions, and my sentiments". Thereafter there is no further reference to the *Confession* in his extant correspondence; and he spoke of it once, in extreme old age, as "a great blunder". He never, so far as our records go, took the easy line of arguing that it was a magnificent and successful stratagem.²

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 99-207.

² *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 366; Ross, *Katorga i Ssylka* (1926), No. 5, pp. 148-9.

Nor is it difficult, by setting the *Confession* written in the Peter-and-Paul fortress beside the *Political Confession* written at Königstein, to trace the evolution of Bakunin's thought. Notwithstanding every difference of style, tone, and circumstance, the two documents are the products of the same mind wrestling with the same problems. The deep-seated mutual hatred of German and Slav—the most fundamental fact in the international situation—is described in almost identical words. In both the objective is the same: the liberation and the free federation of the Slav peoples. But while, in the *Political Confession*, Bakunin treats German and Slav enmity as a regrettable and temporary obstacle to the realisation of Slav freedom with the co-operation of German democracy, in the *Confession* he accepts, and even welcomes, this enmity as an unalterable fact, and professes to base his hopes of Slav liberation on the initiative of a revolutionary Russia. Historically, as a description of his own ambitions up to the moment of his arrest, this is false. But it seems to represent correctly enough the views which he had come to hold at the time the *Confession* was written. How far he was accurately informed of the course of events in Europe during the two years of his imprisonment, we cannot tell. But he must at least have been aware of the universal collapse of revolution and triumph of reaction. Even liberals like Herzen, who had not seen the inside of a prison cell, succumbed to the prevailing mood of pessimism; and Bakunin may be excused if his gloom was of a still deeper hue. Like Herzen, he despaired of Western Europe and, in his despair, turned back with renewed hope towards Russia. Since the days of Proudhon, he had never believed in constitutional democracy (in an eloquent passage of the *Confession* he expressed his contempt for parliaments and for representative government); and in advance of Herzen, who followed the same course some years later, he was tempted to consider, if not with favour, at any rate with an unexpected tolerance, the potentialities of enlightened autocracy.

The *Confession* ended with two petitions. Bakunin begged that he might not be left "to rot for ever in confinement in a fortress". The usual Russian modes of punishment were exile to Siberia, confinement in one of the enormous penal settlements there, or hard labour in the mines. Solitary imprisonment in a cell was a foreign, a German, device not normally applied in

Russia except as a temporary expedient. Let him be sent to Siberia. The harder the labour, the more gratefully he would accept it; for the more easily it would enable him to forget himself. But he implored the Tsar "not to punish him for his German sins with a German punishment". Bakunin was proud of this epigram, and seems to have repeated it in after years to his friends. It is the only phrase from the *Confession* which is quoted, in a somewhat garbled form, by two of the memoir-writers of the next generation.

The other petition was not less significant. The passage of time had severed the external links which bound Bakunin to the home of his youth. The last letters from him to the members of his family had been written from Paris in 1845. These already complain of the absence of replies to earlier letters; and thereafter complete silence descends on both sides. It was dangerous for those left in Russia to correspond with a notorious revolutionary abroad, even though he were their son or brother; and Bakunin himself, during these stirring years, had been too deeply immersed in another world to think much of those who had once been his whole life. The silence of the prison cell and the return to his native land raised once more these ghosts of the past. Premukhino had always been for Bakunin the core and essence of Russia; and the now helpless giant, shedding one by one the turbulent emotions of his later years, returned in secret solitude to the sweet and poignant memories of childhood. He asked permission to see his family "for one last time" and bid them farewell—or if not all of them, at any rate "my old father, my mother, and one beloved sister of whom I do not even know whether she is still alive". If these two petitions were granted, he concluded, he would "bless the Providence which has delivered me from the hands of the Germans in order to place me in the fatherly hands of YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY".

The *Confession*, copied out in a calligraphic hand by one of Orlov's clerks, was duly presented to the Tsar, who read it with exceptional attention. Human nature is susceptible to flattery even when the recipient has good reason to question its sincerity; and compliments patently dictated by self-interest are none the less enjoyed. It gave Nicholas an agreeable sense of power that this ex-ensign of artillery, who had declared war on half the thrones of Europe, should prostrate himself thus help-

lessly and abjectly before the Russian Tsar. It tickled his vanity to be addressed by this proud and loose-tongued rebel in language of humble contrition and fulsome adulation. It flattered him when Bakunin, digressing into sentimental reminiscence, recalled a visit once paid by Nicholas to the Artillery Cadets in their summer camp, and the "inexpressible enthusiasm" and the "trembling reverence" which had greeted his appearance. Nicholas was well used to such compliments. But they had never been paid to him by a Michael Bakunin. He was pleased; and his pleasure inclined him to read with more indulgence than he would have thought possible the narrative sections of the *Confession*. In particular the passages relating to the vices of the German character and of German philosophy, and to the corruption of Western civilisation excited his warm approval, which he recorded in marginal exclamations such as "True", "A striking truth!!!" "An incontestable truth!!!", or simply "N.B." When he had finished, he wrote at the top of the first page a note addressed to the heir to the throne, the future Tsar Alexander II: "It is worth your while to read this—it is very curious and instructive".

It remained to take a decision on Bakunin's two requests. "Every sinner", Nicholas had written sententiously in the margin of the *Confession*, "can be saved by repentance, if it is sincere." But principles must not be carried too far; and Bakunin's defiant refusal to compromise his associates cast doubts upon the sincerity of his repentance. Nicholas saw no reason to be in a hurry. The prisoner could continue for the present to "rot" where he was. But there was no reason why he should not see members of his family. So much favour his self-abasement had earned him. Count Orlov despatched an official letter to Alexander Bakunin informing him that the Tsar had been pleased to give permission for him and for his daughter Tatyana to visit his son Michael, now a prisoner in the Peter-and-Paul fortress. It was the first authentic news of Michael which had reached his family for more than six years.¹

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The last decade had witnessed the general dispersal of the younger generation from Premukhino. Varvara, on her return

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 99-207; Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, p. 442.

from abroad, had sought a reconciliation with her husband, thereby justifying the opinion of her parents that Michael had been the prime mover of her revolt. The good-looking Alexandra, who had once turned Belinsky's and Botkin's heads, married a cavalry officer named Wulf, and became the exemplary mother of a numerous family. Nicholas, also married, had settled down to a life of irreproachable respectability on a neighbouring estate to Premukhino. Ilya had caused a domestic scandal by challenging Varvara's husband to a duel, but was now safely farming in Kazan. The three boys who had run away from school at Tver were still in the lively twenties. Paul, who had been in Germany with Michael, stood nearest to him in quickness of wit and unconventionality of outlook, and was regarded with awe by his friends as an "out-and-out Hegelian". But his actions were orthodox enough; and he occupied for several years an official post at Simferopol, the capital of the Crimea. Alexis, the youngest and least sturdy of the sons, was for some time the only one to remain at Premukhino. Alexander, the last but one, counted as the family scapegrace. He had abandoned a lectureship in law at the University of Odessa to run away with a married woman; and he was only rescued from this entanglement just in time to plunge into an equally compromising, though less scandalous, infatuation for Natalie Beyer. Tragedy had overtaken the Beyer family. Alexandra was dead. But Natalie retained at thirty-five all the passionate recklessness of the early twenties; and Alexander, an unworthy successor of Nicholas Stankevich and of Michael, soon tired of her eager blandishments.

Throughout these six years, Tatyana had remained a tragic and solitary figure, tending her parents, serving sometimes as a link between brothers and sisters busied with their own affairs, and thinking often with numbing anxiety of Michael whom the rest, perhaps, would have been content to forget. For her, Michael was still "the corner-stone of our house, without which our family has been split asunder". She turned to religion, and wrote much of God and resignation, and of some distant, brighter future where all her adored brothers and sisters, even "he who is far from us all but does not forget us", would be reunited "as full of enthusiasm and as full of faith in God and in life as when we parted".

The passing years had not lightened Tatyana's burden. The momentary infatuation for Turgenev had been lived down, but not forgotten. It had left behind it a silently burning flame, a cheated passion, not for the chance instrument which had kindled it, but for the realisation of love itself. She speaks of it, in a rare moment of self-revelation, in one of her letters to Paul:

My love for Turgenev does not enter into any of your categories. Call it folly, or what you will. I was simply in love; and before I myself had realised it, I spent days which it is even now joy to remember. . . . I lived with my whole heart and soul, every vein in me throbbed with life, everything around me was transfigured. Why must I now renounce all this? So happy I have never been since. And shall I tell you, Paul, what I think? I believe that for a woman there is no greater joy, no greater happiness than such love. No, nothing on earth, neither knowledge nor thought, can replace it. Everywhere and always she will feel the lack of it. Her thirst for happiness will remain eternally unsatisfied.

Tatyana's health was threatened. She spent four years in the Crimea, partly with Paul and partly with Alexis; and it was during this time that she made her last despairing bid for happiness. She fell in love, or imagined herself in love, with a musician of some distinction named Serov. He seems to have been a weakling in the clutches of an unscrupulous mistress; and Tatyana believed in the power of her love to redeem him. Her emotion perhaps had in it more of pity than of passion. The attempt failed; and thereafter her heart was still. In the summer of 1851 she returned from the Crimea to Premukhino. Three months later came the summons to the Peter-and-Paul fortress.¹

Old Alexander Bakunin was now eighty-three and totally blind; and the three days' journey to the capital was beyond his strength. Permission was given for Michael's eldest brother to take his place; and at the end of October Nicholas and Tatyana arrived in Petersburg. There is no record of what passed at this first meeting after more than eleven years. But Michael wrote afterwards that it had "restored peace and warmth to his heart"; and for Tatyana it was "a new birth, a hope that has lighted our life". The mother wrote to her unworthy but repentant son in terms of unwonted tenderness; and old Alexander was persuaded to dictate a paternal blessing. A regular corre-

¹ Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, pp. 268, 277-440.

spondence, occasionally interrupted by a capricious censorship, ensued between Michael and his family. The knowledge that the letters would be scrutinised by official eyes imposed restraint on both sides; and those which survive contain nothing but items of family news and the most banal of reflexions. Michael's letters in particular breathed an unfamiliar spirit of humility and universal benevolence. He confessed to his parents that he had not performed the "sacred obligations" of a good son, and thanked God that his "errors" had harmed nobody but himself. He implored his brothers to be warned by his example and not to tread the same path. He begged Varvara's pardon for his hostility to her husband. There was nothing in these letters, as Paul complained, by which he could recognise the old Michael. But they sufficed to revive long-eclipsed memories and to restore long-broken contacts. For Michael, Premukhino became once more, as in the days of his childhood, his "one living interest". It made him feel "fresher and younger" when he wrote to his brothers and sisters; and they, in turn, could think of him, no longer as the dim ghost of a buried past, but as a living figure who, though temporarily withdrawn from their view, possessed a tangible personality and a known habitation.¹

The cells reserved for political prisoners in the Peter-and-Paul fortress had, throughout the nineteenth century, an unsavoury reputation for darkness, damp, and insanitary conditions. Materially, Bakunin suffered by his transfer from an Austrian to a Russian prison. But in other respects, which he himself thought more important, he enjoyed a larger measure of indulgence; and his constant tributes to the "humanity" of his gaolers were not altogether insincere. In particular, he was permitted to receive, in addition to his former supplies of novels and scientific works, a Russian newspaper and several Russian periodicals, and even to follow such trends of European thought and politics as were represented in the pages of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. During the second winter of his confinement there were sent to him from Premukhino a night-shirt lined with squirrel's fur, trousers, and boots; and among the amenities introduced into the prisoner's cell were two canaries in a cage.²

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 207-8, 222-3; Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, pp. 447, 469, 478, 485.

² Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, i. 330-32.

In July 1852 Michael was once more visited by Tatyana alone, and in February 1854 by Tatyana and Paul. The eighteen months which elapsed between these second and third visits were, so far as can be judged from the records, the turning-point of his captivity. His health for the first time seriously broke down. He was attacked by piles and scurvy, disorders consequent on prison diet and on the total absence of that movement which was essential to his powerful and restless frame; and his teeth began to fall out. Continuous headaches, shortness of breath, and noises in the ear like the sound of boiling water, were among the symptoms of which he complains. The swollen, flabby figure with toothless jaw and unkempt beard bore now little resemblance to the sturdy, rather dandified young giant who had entered the Saxon prison; and a glimpse in a mirror made him recoil from himself in horror.¹

Tatyana and Paul spent more than a week in Petersburg, and were allowed to see their brother several times during their stay. It was on these occasions that Michael succeeded in handing unobserved to Tatyana three notes written in pencil on pages torn from a book, the first two in French, the last in Russian. These three notes were Michael's only free and untrammelled utterance throughout his prison life; and they betray both the impotent despair of the trapped animal and the querulous pettiness of the human being who has lived for years exclusively in his own society.

You will never understand what it means to feel yourself buried alive, to say to yourself at every moment of day and night: I am a slave, I am annihilated, reduced to lifelong impotence. To hear even in your cell the rumblings of the coming struggle, which will decide the most vital interests of humanity, and to be forced to remain idle and silent. To be rich in ideas, of which some at least might be beautiful, and not to realise one of them; to feel love in your heart, yes love, despite this outward petrification, and not to be able to expend it on anything or anyone. To feel yourself full of devotion and heroism to serve a sacred cause, and to see all your enthusiasm break against four bare walls, my only witnesses and my only confidants.

That is my life! And even that is nothing in comparison with an idea far more terrible: that of the idiocy which is the predestined end of such an existence. Shut up the greatest genius in such a prison

¹ Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, p. 492.

as mine, and you will see that after some years a Napoleon would become stupid and Jesus Christ himself wicked. As for me, who am neither great like Napoleon nor infinitely good like Jesus Christ, I shall need much less time to become altogether brutish.

He suspects even Tatyana of apathy and neglect. She is "too timid and too provincial" to make effective representations to the authorities on his behalf.

You have fallen into a deplorable apathy and a resignation which is wholly Christian. You have of course made some efforts, but you have been frightened by the first defeat, and have no longer any hope but in God. I am not a Christian and do not believe in resignation.

Then, in the third note, he rounds on himself as an egoist, declares his confidence that "his sweet providence of Premukhino is no longer asleep," and, noticing for the first time how ill and worn she herself looks, begs Paul to take her to a clever Petersburg doctor.¹

A few weeks later, in March 1854, Bakunin was transferred from the Peter-and-Paul fortress, where he had lain for almost three years, to the Schlüsselburg prison on the shores of Lake Ladoga. The Crimean war was imminent; and apprehension of a bombardment of Petersburg by the English fleet had dictated this precaution. But the outstanding event of the year in the Bakunin family was unconnected either with public affairs or with the prisoner in Schlüsselburg. In December, Alexander Bakunin died in his eighty-eighth year.²

For the widow, devoted though she had been to her husband, this long-expected bereavement brought release from a lifetime of obligation. Of the forty-four years of her married life, the first thirty had been devoted to the rearing of children, the remainder to the care of an infirm and helpless old man. At the age of sixty-two, Varvara Bakunin discovered new sources of energy. During the whole of her married life she had never been further than Tver and Moscow, and for many years now had not left Premukhino. Three months after her husband's death, accompanied by Alexis, she travelled by the newly-opened railway

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 243-8.

² *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 275.

to Petersburg and visited Michael in Schlüsselburg. The sight of her eldest son, once so proud, now brought so low, revived all her maternal solicitude; and for the next two years she exerted herself unceasingly in pleading his cause with the authorities and in alleviating his lot.

The moment seemed not unpropitious. In February 1855, a month before Varvara Bakunin's visit to Petersburg, Nicholas I died. Alexander II reigned in his stead; and new rulers were traditionally disposed to clemency. Shortly after Alexander Bakunin's death, his sons volunteered for the army; and five brothers in the service of the Tsar were a powerful plea for any prisoner. Moreover Ekaterina Bakunin, a niece of Alexander, and therefore a first cousin of Michael, had won distinction as head of the nursing services at the front. In this capacity she enjoyed a certain favour at Court; and her intervention was also solicited on her cousin's behalf.

Varvara Bakunin's first petition, in which she besought the Tsar to allow Michael "to stand with his brothers in the front ranks of your valiant army and there meet an honourable death or earn with his blood the right to be called my son", was written in Petersburg immediately after her first visit to Schlüsselburg. But it met with no response; and for the present she had to be content to supply Michael with cheeses and mushrooms from Premukhino. In January 1856 she paid another visit to Schlüsselburg. She was shocked by the progressive decline in her son's health; and she begged that, in order to provide him with some employment and means of exercising himself, a carpenter's bench might be installed in his cell. This request was referred to the Tsar himself. But it, too, was rejected. Still the indefatigable mother did not despair. In August she came once more to Schlüsselburg, and drew up a fresh petition for her son's release, this time to Prince Dolgorukov, who had succeeded Orlov as principal aide-de-camp to the Tsar; and she offered as a guarantee for his good behaviour the heads of her five other sons, "three of them fathers of families", whose loyalty to the throne had never been open to doubt. Finally in November, when Alexis again visited Michael with Ekaterina Bakunin, his mother submitted yet another petition to the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, Prince Gorchakov. It must have been on this occasion that Michael, according to the story which he after-

wards told to Herzen, begged Alexis to bring him poison, for he could no longer bear his life; and Alexis promised that, if failure once more greeted their efforts, he would do so. What is more certain is that Alexis brought away from their interview a rough code devised by Michael, so that the result of the petition might be conveyed to him in the guise of harmless family news.¹

It seems paradoxical that Michael should have owed his liberation at last to the mother whom he had never loved, and who had perhaps felt for him in his youth less than the normal measure of maternal affection. But it is clear that her devoted energy, and the influences which she had been able to invoke, were the determining factor. Early in February 1857, Michael Bakunin received permission to address a petition to the Tsar; and the permission in itself was a promise that the petition, if couched in fitting terms, would not go unanswered. He approached the task with sincere trepidation. Long confinement, he told Dolgorukov, had so dulled his faculties that he found it hard to write, torn as he was between the fear of saying too much and of not saying enough. But when he began to write, the words flowed easily enough. His life was over; and the only thing that mattered was that he should end it not between four walls of a prison cell. He had already drunk so deep of the cup of humiliation that it was no good being squeamish about the dregs. He abased himself more profoundly, more abjectly, than he had ever done before. He wrote eloquently of the magnanimity and benevolence of the late Tsar, and of his own errors and crimes, which he had never cursed so bitterly as now, when they had deprived him of the possibility of demonstrating in arms, like his brothers, his devotion to his Tsar and his country. Though not old in years, being only forty-four (in fact he was not yet forty-three), he knew that he had not long to live. He desired only one thing: "to draw my last breath in freedom, to look upon the clear sky and the fresh meadows, to see the house of my father, to prostrate myself at his grave, to devote the remnant of my days to my mother who has worn herself out for me, and to prepare myself worthily for death".

The prisoner's petition was dated February 14th, 1857. Exactly a week later he was informed that the Tsar had been

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 276-81; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 269; Kornilov, *Godly Stranstviya*, pp. 505-62.

pleased to offer him the choice of staying where he was or of perpetual banishment to Siberia. He had no hesitation in preferring the second alternative; and he begged for permission, on his way to Siberia, to spend twenty-four hours at Premukhino in order to bid farewell to the home and family which he could now never expect to see again. The request was granted. On the evening of March 8th he was brought to Petersburg and took his place, with a colonel and two gendarmes, in a special wagon attached to a goods train bound for Tver. On the next day, still accompanied by his guard, he arrived by sleigh at Premukhino.¹

It was almost seventeen years since Michael Bakunin had seen the only spot on earth which he ever called his home. He was never to see it again during the nineteen years of life which lay before him. His brothers and sisters had assembled in full force to greet him; for on this one day in all their later life was the dream of a family reunion, of a shared revival of childhood's most sacred memories, as if by miracle realised. So perhaps Michael had dramatised the scene when he obtained permission for the visit; and in this spirit he was awaited. But reality has starker dramatic effects of its own. As Michael trod once more the hallowed ground, his heart failed him. The contrast was too vivid and too bitter between this home-coming and the home-comings of his youth, between the brilliant, self-confident young rebel, and the broken, prematurely aged prisoner under guard, who had humbled his pride before the oppressor, and sold his soul for an illusory freedom of the body. The sight of those who had known him otherwise, who had once accepted him as their leader and their hero, struck numbness into his heart and brain. He spoke freely and willingly with none, looked with indifference on beloved faces and once familiar scenes, and spent the greater part of the time playing beggar-my-neighbour with the old family nurse, sunk in that "idiocy" which he had once foreseen as the inevitable outcome of his long confinement. Next morning, still plunged in apathy and silence, he was led away by his guards.²

Alexander afterwards visited Michael in London, and Paul in Italy. The others saw him for the last time as they watched the sleigh disappear slowly across the snow.

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 270-79.

² Kornilov, *Gody Stranstviya*, p. 563.

CHAPTER 18

SIBERIAN ADVENTURE

THE party travelled by post-sleigh on the great Siberian road, and on the eighteenth day reached Omsk, the capital of Western Siberia. Here the guards left their prisoner and returned to Petersburg. Before their departure, Bakunin handed to them letters for Prince Dolgorukov and for his mother. The first, couched in the fulsome language which had become second nature to him, expressed his "sincere and profound" gratitude for the Prince's "powerful intercession" on his behalf. The second complained that the money which had been given him for the journey was insufficient. Then he moved on to Tomsk—for the first time for eight years a free man. A remote district in the province of Tomsk had been assigned as his place of residence. But when he reached Tomsk itself he pleaded ill-health, and on this score received permission to live in the town. He had lost no time in obtaining this first mitigation of his sentence.¹

Society in Siberia in the middle of the last century fell into three classes: officials, merchants, and political exiles. Where numbers were so few, and isolation so complete, there could be no exclusiveness. The three classes associated freely together; and the exiles, who were often men of outstanding intelligence and character, enjoyed an anomalous but universal respect. Political outcasts, they were none the less recognised as the fine flower of Siberian culture. Into this variegated and easy-going society, Michael Bakunin was readily welcomed. The first months of his stay in Siberia were a time of physical and moral recuperation. The breath and warmth of life began to stir again in the bruised, numb body and soul.

But as vitality returned, and memories of the prison-house grew dimmer, the present conditions of his life became more irksome. The bars of a cage had been exchanged for the more tantalising confinement of the tethered animal. Materially as well as spiritually, the circle within which he could seek sus-

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 296, 310; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 279-80.

tenance was appallingly narrow. A political exile had to look after himself; and Bakunin could not expect to live indefinitely on subsidies from Premukhino. In one respect, at any rate, he had not changed. He still had an invincible belief in his own capacity to make his fortune—if only circumstances were different. The gold deposits on the Lena river were being opened up at a great rate. Gold was the talk of Siberia; and Bakunin was soon convinced that the new industry was the one career for an honest man like himself. But what good was the Lena gold-field to him, sitting a thousand miles away in Tomsk and sternly prohibited from moving more than thirty versts from the town? In August he applied for removal of the thirty-verst restriction and for permission to travel freely in Siberia, in order that he might relieve his family of the burden of supporting him. His letter was forwarded to Petersburg with a note from the local chief of police attesting the applicant's "sincere and profound repentance for his former crime". But Dolgorukov judged it "inconvenient" to comply with the request. "As for the support which he receives from his relatives," he curtly concluded, "it cannot ruin them." Bakunin had to settle down to his first Siberian winter in the cramped surroundings of Tomsk.¹

There was another expedient for earning his daily bread to which he had once resorted—with singular lack of success—in Moscow. He could take pupils. He had struck up a friendship with a Polish exile named Tol who, in the intervals of hard drinking, his habitual antidote to Siberian monotony, made his living as a teacher. Among Tol's pupils were the two daughters of Ksaweri Kwiatkowski, a Polish merchant long settled in Siberia. Bakunin offered to teach the girls French. It was an agreeable family living in a little house on the outskirts of the town. Bakunin found that, when he had nothing else to do, his footsteps naturally carried him in that direction; and since he seldom had anything to do, he became a daily visitor. It was the first intimate human relationship, and the first contact with women, that he had enjoyed for nearly ten years.

All his life Michael Bakunin had been used to feminine adoration. It responded to a deep need of his nature. In youth he had taken his fill of it, though his impotence had saved him from the impulse to concentrate his emotion on a single object. He

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 298, 427; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 282-4.

emerged from prison an intensely lonely man. He was cast adrift in a small Siberian town. There was every chance that he would fall in love with the first attractive young woman who seemed inclined to listen to his tale. These conditions were fulfilled by Antonia, the elder of the Kwiatkowski sisters. Before the winter was over, he proposed marriage to her, and was accepted.¹

Antonia Kwiatkowski was in her eighteenth year; and fifteen years later men still found her pretty and fascinating. But when this has been recorded, it is surprisingly difficult to complete the portrait. Nothing that she said has been remembered, nothing that she wrote (except one insignificant letter) preserved. She was not given to the ready expression of her thoughts and feelings; and many doubted whether she ever thought or felt deeply. Her husband boasted, more than a year after their marriage, that "she shared all his aspirations". A more impartial observer has recorded that "she took rather less interest in social ideas than in last year's fashions"; and Bakunin himself once jestingly declared that the only book she had read in her life was *Causes Célèbres*—and that only for the sake of the illustrations. Those who saw them together in later years thought the match so unaccountable that the most fantastic theories were devised to explain it—that he had married Antonia to "save her from the advances of a dishonourable man who was trying to compromise her", or to lull the suspicions of the authorities and pave the way for his escape. There was, in reality, nothing abstruse about the marriage, even on Antonia's side. She was one of those naturally submissive women who want nothing more than to let a man settle their destiny for them, and nothing less than to settle it for themselves. There were few eligible wooers in Tomsk. Michael Bakunin, middle-aged, ill-kempt, and toothless, still retained his power to fascinate; and he was the eldest son of a distinguished Russian family. Antonia's capacities, including her capacity for love, were limited. But such as they were, she laid them gladly and unreservedly at the feet of them an who had chosen her.

The prospect of marriage once more made the financial question urgent. The authorities were pleased, as a mark of returning favour, to offer Bakunin a post in the administration

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 284-5, 367-8.

as a "clerk of the fourth grade". But a livelihood on such terms—even though it would have carried with it the much desired transfer to Irkutsk, the capital of Eastern Siberia—was beneath the dignity of a Bakunin. He rejected the offer, and married Antonia in the late summer of 1858. In what proportions the father of the bride and the brothers of the bridegroom contributed to the support of the new *ménage* remains unrecorded. It is also permissible to speculate whether Antonia knew that there was no danger of an increase in the number of mouths to be fed. But Bakunin was in the seventh heaven.

She fears nothing, and is delighted with everything like a child [he wrote after six months of married life]. I shall guard her as the flower of my old age.¹

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A new and imposing figure now appears on the scene. General Nicholas Muraviev, Bakunin's second cousin on the mother's side, had been governor of Eastern Siberia for the past ten years. He had opened up the country to trade by founding the port of Nikolaevsk at the mouth of the Amur; and at the beginning of 1858 he signed a treaty with the Chinese Government by which Russia obtained all the territory to the north and west of that river. These services to his country entitled him to indulge certain eccentricities of character and opinion. But when, to celebrate his victory over the Chinese, he petitioned the Tsar to amnesty four political exiles, including his cousin, even his prestige did not prevent the rejection of the petition. Towards the end of 1858 he came on a visit to Tomsk and Bakunin met him for the first time.²

It may be assumed that old Varvara Bakunin had not failed to solicit the powerful Governor-General, whose mother was her own first cousin, on behalf of her unhappy son. But family influence cannot alone explain the strange mutual attraction which sprang up between the two men—an attraction which afterwards cost both severe criticism at the hands of their friends. That the arbitrary, self-willed imperialist, who had

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 428; Bauler, *Byloe* (July 1907), pp. 75-6; Arnoud, *Nouvelle Revue* (August 1891), p. 594; Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 108; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 300, 368.

² *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 308; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 368.

just annexed a vast province, and the restless revolutionary, who spent his whole active life in warfare against governments, should have discovered, even momentarily and in the abnormal conditions of Siberian life, a measure of common ground, is a fact explicable in part by the political circumstances of the time, in part by the temperamental impulsiveness common to both of them.

Nicholas I had gone down to an unhonoured grave amid the scandal of the Crimean war; and under the stimulus of military defeat, Russia began to feel obscure democratic yearnings. Alexander II, sincere, irresolute, and anxious to be popular, showed a certain inclination to indulge these new aspirations. The court and the intelligentsia took their cue from the Tsar, and began to discuss such ambitious projects as the liberation of the serfs, the redistribution of the land, and the introduction of local self-government. Muraviev fell easily into the current fashion. There had always been enlightened liberals in Russia, even among the rulers. Like Catherine the Great, who corresponded with Voltaire about penal reform, and Alexander I, who drafted model constitutions, Muraviev did not allow theory to interfere with the exercise of his own will. But he professed the most admirable principles; and since he could bear no despots except himself, and no bureaucrats save those who executed his orders, he readily passed for an enemy of despotism and bureaucracy. So long as the political exiles did not thwart or offend him, he was disposed to win a reputation for independence and broad-mindedness by constituting himself their protector. The notoriety of his cousin's crimes made the gesture of patronage all the more striking. Muraviev had a taste for dramatic gestures.

Bakunin's position made him sensitive to the benefits of powerful protection; and his capacity for self-deception had not been diminished by his sufferings. His former friend Herzen, now settled in London, had founded there a Russian journal called *The Bell*; and when *The Bell* began to attack Muraviev, Bakunin sprang to the defence of his patron in three letters which ran to the dimensions of a small volume. He attributed to Muraviev "self-denial, complete neglect of his own interests, and princely generosity". He described him as a "simple democrat", a hater of the privileged classes, a "revolutionary nature", who "knows no religion but the religion of humanity". Mura-

viev, he assured Herzen, was "the only man enjoying power and authority in Russia whom we can and must call, without the slightest exaggeration and in the full sense of the word, ours".

But neither gullibility nor gratitude suffices by itself to explain Bakunin's infatuation. Muraviev represents a definite stage in the development of Bakunin's political thought. In the *Confession* to the Tsar he had daringly offered Nicholas I the leadership of a revolutionary pan-Slav federation which would regenerate Europe. This extraordinary mission he now transferred, with the same impetuosity and with no better warrant, from Nicholas to Muraviev. The Crimean war had inflamed Slav patriotism. The despised Western Powers had cheated Russia of Constantinople—the future capital of the Slav federation. The Austrian Empire, since 1848 the principal bugbear of every good revolutionary, had earned the hatred of the Russian patriots by deserting Russia at the hour of her need. Revolutionary and patriot could unite in a common hatred. "Muraviev", wrote Bakunin to Herzen by way of clinching the argument in the Governor's favour, "hates the Austrians no less than myself." Muraviev was the predestined saviour not only of Russia but of Europe. Uniting the Slav peoples under his command, he would march against the hated Austrian and the hated Turk. He would have no truck with "a constitution and a talkative parliament of the nobility". His instrument would be a "temporary iron dictatorship"—a "rational dictatorship which, according to his conviction, can alone save Russia". Such was the extraordinary shape now assumed by Bakunin's revolutionary dreams. He had rejected for ever the Western conception of parliamentary democracy. Revolutionary dictatorship, curiously blended with pan-Slav fanaticism, took its place in his programme.¹

In the spring of 1859, four or five months after Muraviev's visit to Tomsk, Bakunin obtained permission to move with his wife to Irkutsk; and there he was given a post in the Amur Company, which had been founded, under Muraviev's auspices, by a wealthy merchant named Benardacci for the development of trade in the newly annexed province. In the summer he travelled widely in Eastern Siberia on the business of the company. The freedom of movement was congenial, and the salary was 2000 roubles a year. But Bakunin soon discovered that there

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 303-65.

was "no profit in it". In November he threw up the job and requested Benardacci to give him some other employment. Benardacci had in all probability never had any illusions about Bakunin's qualifications as a commercial traveller. But no merchant who knew his business would miss such an opportunity to oblige the all-powerful Governor. Bakunin was not called on to perform any further duties. But his salary continued to be paid.

In this rather undignified position, Bakunin spent two more winters in Irkutsk. But now that health and vigour were restored, he was less resigned than ever to spending the rest of his days in these remote, foreign wastes. No stone was left unturned. Twice more did Varvara Bakunin petition for a pardon for her son. Muraviev wrote once again to Dolgorukov, and confidently assured the exile that in six months he would be back in Russia. But Petersburg still turned a deaf ear. It was time for action. Since Russia was irrevocably closed to him, Bakunin's thoughts turned impatiently in the opposite direction. At the beginning of 1861, Muraviev retired. But, by a stroke of signal good fortune, he was succeeded by General Korsakov, whose cousin Natalie had just married Paul Bakunin. The omens were still propitious. Now that Muraviev's conquests had opened up the Amur route to the Pacific, Irkutsk—as Bakunin significantly remarked—was nearer Europe than Tomsk. The thing should be feasible, given one condition. Money was essential for any enterprise.¹

It was at this juncture that Bakunin developed singular scruples about his relations with Benardacci. He had received from him two years' salary and travelling expenses—more than 5000 roubles in all. He must confess that he had done no work for his employer, and conscience forbade him to keep money which had not been fairly earned. It did not look well for a Bakunin to live on a merchant's charity. He could not rest until he had repaid to Benardacci what he had received from him; and since the money had been spent, he could only do this by means of an advance from someone else. Thus Michael wrote, with a great air of conviction, to his brothers at Premukhino. From them he could beg without shame; for everything he

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 308-12; ii. 506, 510; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 314, 368, 373-8.

received from that quarter could be debited to his hypothetical share in the yet undivided paternal estate. It seems an unkind suspicion, but one is tempted to suppose that Michael's petition was inspired not by a quixotic wish to repay Benardacci, but by the hope of obtaining a large sum in ready cash for an object which he could not avow. If this was his purpose, it was frustrated. His brothers were so moved by his plea that they sent the whole sum due direct to Benardacci.

In his plight Bakunin turned to an unexpected quarter. A few months before, he had written to announce his marriage to his old enemy Katkov. The motive of the letter was at first sight obscure. But there were few now left in Russia who had "belonged to the Stankevich-Belinsky set". Katkov was one of the few; and having become a successful journalist and the editor of a popular monthly, he might be in funds. Bakunin now wrote again with a request for a loan. Katkov was a cynic, and remembered the petitioner's financial reputation. The request went unanswered, and Bakunin was compelled to resume the pose of a commercial traveller. In the spring of 1861, he obtained from Sabashnikov, a merchant of Kyakhta, the offer of 1000 roubles and a future salary for a journey to the mouth of the Amur. Korsakov demanded his word of honour that he would be back in Irkutsk before navigation closed; and on these terms Bakunin obtained from the complacent Governor an open letter to the commanders of all ships on the Amur and its tributaries instructing them to give him a passage when he required it. Before starting, he confided his real intention to a few intimates. He took farewell of his wife and her father. He left Antonia nothing but his debts—and the vague hope that somewhere and at some time, if his attempt succeeded and if the Russian Government let her go, she would be able to rejoin him. On June 5th, 1861, he set out from Irkutsk.¹

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Bakunin's first halt was at Kyakhta, where he received not only the 1000 roubles promised by Sabashnikov, but substantial advances from other merchants for whom he undertook various commissions—amounting, if the official account is to be

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iv. 289-97, 302-3, 369-73, 380-82; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 321-2; ii. 497-514.

believed, to a further 2500 roubles. From Kyakhta he proceeded to Sretensk, and thence by steamer to Nikolaevsk, the port at the mouth of the river. This he reached on July 2nd, 1861, having accomplished the first 2000 miles of his journey in exactly four weeks.

The seven days spent at Nikolaevsk were the critical period of his enterprise. He had reached the ostensible limit of his journey. To travel further afield, or even to linger in this out-of-the-way spot, might easily arouse suspicion and lead to preventive measures being taken. The open letter from Korsakov to commanders of ships on the Amur and its tributaries carried him no further. But ocean-going ships seldom came up to Nikolaevsk, and their nearest ordinary port of call was Kastri on the seaboard of Eastern Siberia. A government vessel, the *Strelok*, was to leave Nikolaevsk for Kastri on July 9th; and Bakunin induced a certain Afanasiev, who was chief of staff to the Governor of the Maritime Province, to address a request to the commander of the *Strelok* to convey to Kastri "the traveller Bakunin", who would return overland by another route. On July 9th the *Strelok*, with Bakunin on board, duly sailed for the open sea. In the strait which separates Sakhalin from the mainland, she took in tow an American sailing vessel, the *Vickery*, trading to the Japanese ports. It was a golden opportunity for Bakunin. Before the American ship had cast off, he had arranged to transfer to her; and the commander of the *Strelok*, having received no instructions to limit his passenger's movements, saw no reason to interfere. The *Vickery's* last Russian port of call was Olga, where Bakunin, tempting providence for the last time, lodged with the Russian commanding officer while the ship was in harbour. At length, on August 4th, Bakunin reached the first Japanese port of Hakodate, and assured a solicitous Russian consul of his firm intention to return to Irkutsk by way of Shanghai and Peking. On August 24th he was in Yokohama.¹

He tarried there no longer than he could help. On September 17th, 1861,² he set sail for San Francisco on the American s.s. *Carrington*. On board he struck up an acquaintance with a

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 320, 325, 358, 378, 388, 430; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xi. 278; Lemke, *Ocherki*, p. 134.

² The use of the Western calendar is resumed at this point.

young English clergyman named Koe, who was travelling round the world in charge of a wealthy pupil. Koe found Bakunin "more like a friend than anyone I have met for a long time"; and his diary preserves many illuminating glimpses of the voyage. During the long idle days across the Pacific, Bakunin told the story of his life and imprisonments, declared that his two "great objects" were Slav confederation and the destruction of Austria, sang Russian songs, and interested himself in a budding love-affair between a returning missionary from China and an American lady passenger. As befitted Koe's cloth, they talked much of religion. Bakunin condemned the "rabid atheism" of his friend Herzen, and foresaw "great discussions" on the subject when they met in London. He sympathised with Protestantism, and even thought that his wife, who, being a Pole, was a Roman Catholic, might "under gentle treatment" be converted to it. (This was tactfully consoling to the young clergyman, who also contemplated marriage with a Catholic lady.) Finally, a few days before reaching port, a still more delicate subject was broached. "I find", wrote Koe in his diary of October 10th, "I shall have to lend him the money to reach New York—some \$250."

The *Carrington* reached San Francisco without mishap on the evening of October 14th, 1861. Bakunin borrowed \$300 from Koe, and wrote to Herzen begging that \$500 might be sent to New York to defray his passage across the Atlantic. Then, after a week's delay, he took ship for Panama, crossed the isthmus and embarked for New York, where he arrived on November 18th. Koe, who had spent some time in the Far West and travelled overland, rejoined him there a fortnight later.¹

Of Bakunin's brief stay in the United States there is disappointingly little to record. In New York he found two German exiles: Solger, whom he had known in Zürich in 1843, and Kapp, who had formerly been tutor to Herzen's son. He went to Boston and visited Agassiz the naturalist, whom he had met in Switzerland, and who was now curator of the Zoological Museum at Harvard and a friend of Longfellow. He intended to push on as far as Washington; but it is not known whether he did so. He obtained only the most superficial view of the issues involved

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 75; Lemke, *Ocherki*, p. 134; unpublished diary of Rev. F. P. Koe.

in the Civil War which was tearing America asunder. He noticed, however, that "the country has been brought by way of democracy to the same miserable results which we have achieved by despotism", and he found in America a "universal and unconditional sympathy for Russia and faith in the future of the Russian people". Having made this gratifying discovery, Bakunin set out on the last stage of his journey. He left New York on December 14th, 1861. On the morning of December 27th he landed at Liverpool and left at once for London.¹

The dramatic simplicity of Bakunin's escape, apparently aided and abetted by the highest officials in Siberia, puzzled Western minds unfamiliar with the laxity of Russian administration in outlying districts of the Russian Empire. Bakunin's admitted friendship with successive governors of Siberia seemed in itself ambiguous. These suspicions were reinforced by the old rumour that he was a Russian agent; and in later years, when the quarrel with Marx was at its bitterest, it was more than once hinted by his enemies that the Russian Government had deliberately let Bakunin loose on revolutionary Europe for the discomfiture of honest Marxists. But while these fantastic rumours can be at once dismissed, the question of the connivance of individual officials must remain open. The official enquiry into the escape of this important "criminal" dragged on for two and a half years; and since the effective part of it was left in the hands of Korsakov, who could hardly condemn his subordinates without disclosing his own negligence, it yielded no appreciable results. In the end only two sentences, and those of the lightest character, were pronounced. In May 1864 Afanasiev was condemned to two months' imprisonment for having improperly requested the commander of the *Strelak* to take Bakunin on board, and a midshipman to one month's confinement to barracks for having failed to deliver in good time a despatch from Irkutsk warning the Governor of the Maritime Province that Bakunin was a political prisoner. The other culprits got off scot-free.²

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 76, 79; Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 134-5.

² *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, i. 321, 347-88. The circumstances of Bakunin's escape from Siberia have been discussed by the writer in greater detail in the *Slavonic Review* (January 1937), pp. 377-88.

BOOK IV

REDIVIVUS

“I shall continue to be an impossible person so long as those who are now possible remain possible.”

BAKUNIN to Ogarev
(June 14th, 1868)

CHAPTER 19

FIRST STEPS IN LONDON

ON the evening of December 27th, 1861, Michael Bakunin burst into Orsett House, Westbourne Terrace, Herzen's residence for the past twelve months, just as Herzen and Ogarev were sitting down to supper. Natalie, Ogarev's second wife and Herzen's mistress, who had recently given birth to twins, lay on a couch in the same room. "What! do you get oysters here?" was Bakunin's first question. Then, going up to Natalie, he exclaimed: "It is bad to be lying down. Get well! We must work, not lie down." Presently Kelsiev, a poor Russian exile who was at this time a pensioner of Herzen, appeared on the scene and was introduced to the revolutionary veteran. Bakunin began to question them eagerly about the course of political events.

"Only in Poland there are some demonstrations," said Herzen; "but perhaps the Poles will come to their senses and understand that a rising is out of the question when the Tsar has just freed the serfs. Clouds are gathering, but we must hope that they will disperse."

"And in Italy?"

"All quiet."

"And in Austria?"

"All quiet."

"And in Turkey?"

"All quiet everywhere, and nothing in prospect."

"Then what are we to do?" said Bakunin in amazement. "Must we go to Persia or India to stir things up? It's enough to drive one mad; I cannot sit and do nothing."¹

The clash of temperaments and opinions was latent from the outset; and Herzen at least soon had the wit to divine it. Bakunin was now in his forty-eighth year. Physically he had aged and coarsened, almost beyond recognition. A giant in stature, he had swelled enormously in bulk and weighed twenty stone, reminding Herzen of a mastodon and the more prosaic

¹ Tuchkova-Ogareva, *Vospominaniya*, p. 305; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 3.

Marx of a bullock. He had lost all his teeth; and he allowed his thick, curly hair and beard to grow in luxuriant neglect. Only the clear, flashing eyes and shaggy eyebrows recalled the handsome young dandy of thirty-three whom Herzen had last seen in Paris. But mentally Michael had scarcely changed.

I feel young enough [he wrote to George Sand in Paris]. My age is the same as that of Goethe's Faust when he said that he was "too old only to play, too young to be without desire". Cut off from political life for thirteen years, I am thirsting for action, and consider that, next to love, action is the highest form of happiness.

Herzen, disillusioned by the long, slow triumph of reaction, and battered by a domestic tragedy of exceptional bitterness, had passed, during the fourteen years since they had last met, from early manhood to advanced middle age. In Bakunin the fires of youth were still unquenched. Imprisonment, if it had broken the body, had not tamed his incorrigible optimism. In 1847 Bakunin and Herzen had been young men together. Now Bakunin discerned in his former contemporary the distressing symptoms of premature old age; and Herzen thought Bakunin a naïve, impulsive child.¹

Politically, too, they had ceased to belong to the same generation. Bakunin retained not only the spirit, but the opinions, of the furious 'forties. He had come back into the world like a ghost from the past. He was like a man awakened from a long trance, who tries to take up life again at the point where he laid it down, and expects to find everything around him in the same position as at the moment when he lost consciousness. Bakunin had not, like Herzen, watched the collapse of the revolution and the final ignominious extinction of political liberty all over the continent of Europe; and he enquired helplessly for news of a struggle which had ceased ten years ago. He raved about the break-up of the Austrian Empire which, in 1848, had seemed so imminent; and he was told that the dream of pan-Slav federation was now a forgotten curiosity of the remote past. He denounced the tyranny of Alexander II, from whose clutches he had so hardly escaped, in the same terms in which men had been wont to rail against Nicholas I; and he was bewildered to learn that this same Alexander was the liberator of the serfs, the patron of pro-

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 11.

gress and reform, the star of hope of a regenerated Russia. Time had stood still for Bakunin for twelve years, while it revolutionised the thoughts and opinions of his former associates.

The family at Orsett House consisted at this time of Herzen and his three legitimate children, Alexander (or Sasha for short), Natalie, and Olga; of Ogarev and his wife Natalie; of Natalie Ogarev's three children (of whom Herzen was the father), the three-year-old Liza and the infant twins; and of an elderly English governess, Miss Reeve. A Polish *émigré* named Tchorzewski, who ran Herzen's errands and kept a bookshop in Soho where Herzen's publications were on sale, was a recognised hanger-on of the establishment; and there was a constant flow and ebb of Russian visitors. Lodgings were found for Bakunin first at Grove Terrace, St. John's Wood, and then, in closer proximity to Orsett House, at 10 Paddington Green, where he remained for almost a year. At Paddington Green, Mrs. Welch, the landlady, and Grace, the maid-of-all-work, soon became his willing slaves. In defiance of all English custom, the faithful Grace would carry to his room, up to a late hour of the night, successive jugs of boiling water and bowls of sugar for his tea. There was in Bakunin a fundamental simplicity and absence of pretension which enabled him to win the unfailing affection and confidence of working people; and long after his departure stories were told in the house of the queer habits and queerer guests of this fascinating foreign gentleman.¹

At Orsett House the favourable impression proved less durable. It became urgently necessary to consider what Bakunin was to live on. He had arrived in London with a mass of debts (including a debt of 2000 francs to Herzen) and no assets. The only available resource was the charity of his friends. Botkin, who was in Paris, sent £23, and talked of an annual allowance of 500 francs. Herzen furnished £10 a month. Turgenev promised 1500 francs a year, and opened a subscription list in Paris which yielded a further 200 francs. Golinski, a wealthy Pole, gave 1000 francs. There was even a plan to make a collection in Moscow. But Bakunin himself showed a disconcerting indifference to the problem which so much exercised his friends. He had borrowed his way round the world; and he fully intended to exercise his old privilege of paying no debts save those which threatened

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xix. 429-30.

"imprisonment or dishonour". Herzen drew his unwilling attention to ways and means of helping himself. His sensational escape had made him a European figure. Any journal in three or four countries would pay a high price for the story of his imprisonment and flight. The great Buloz wanted it for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Herzen was sure that Bakunin could earn from 20,000 to 30,000 francs without the slightest difficulty. Bakunin did not dispute it. He announced in the English press that he would shortly publish "a brief summary of the most important events" of his political career. He talked, at frequent intervals throughout the rest of his life, about writing his memoirs. But he could never bring himself to begin. The deep-rooted tradition of his class told him that it was beneath his dignity to write for money. He preferred to live on his friends.¹

Herzen regarded Bakunin's *insouciance* with growing irritation. Herzen was generous. He had supported Ogarev for years, and no impoverished Russian who came to Orsett House went away empty-handed. But he liked to bestow his assistance where it was rated at its true value. His *bourgeois* sense of the advantages of orderliness in matters of finance was revolted by Bakunin's blithe aristocratic assumption that money did not count; and he has left in his memoirs a mordant picture of this stage in the career of the great revolutionary:

Bakunin recovered in our midst from nine years of silence and solitude. He argued, preached, gave orders, shouted, decided, arranged, organised, exhorted, the whole day, the whole night, the whole twenty-four hours on end. In the brief moments which remained, he would throw himself down at his desk, sweep a small space clear of tobacco ash, and begin to write five, ten, fifteen letters to Semipalatinsk and Arad, to Belgrade and Constantinople, to Bessarabia, Moldavia, and White Russia. In the middle of a letter he would throw down his pen in order to refute some reactionary Dalmatian; then, without finishing his speech, he would seize his pen and go on writing. This of course was all the easier as he was writing and talking on the same subject. His activity, his leisure, his appetite, like all his other characteristics—even his gigantic size and continual sweat—were of superhuman proportions; and he himself remained, as of old, a giant with leonine head and tousled mane.

At fifty he was still the same wandering student, the same homeless Bohemian of the Rue de Bourgogne, caring nothing for the

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xi. 373; xv. 51-2, 54, 78, 220; xvi. 206; xxi. 412, 417.

morrow, despising money, scattering it on all sides when he had it, borrowing indiscriminately right and left when he had none, with the same simplicity with which children take from their parents and never think of repayment, with the same simplicity with which he himself was prepared to give to anyone his last penny, reserving for himself only what was necessary for cigarettes and tea. He was never embarrassed by this mode of life; he was born to be the great wanderer, the great outcast. If anyone had asked him what he thought about the rights of property, he might have replied as Lalande replied to Napoleon about God: "Sire, in the course of my career I have never found the slightest need to believe in him".

In the Herzen circle everything told against poor Bakunin—even that gross way of eating and drinking which had once shocked Minna Wagner, and which prison habits are not likely to have improved. The only member of the family who regarded him with unmixed appreciation was the three-year-old Liza. Child understood child; and "big Liza" became Bakunin's nickname at Orsett House.¹

Everyone, including the parties concerned, seems to have assumed that Bakunin would become a regular collaborator of *The Bell*, and that the dual partnership of Herzen and Ogarev would now be transformed into a triumvirate. In the previous November it was *The Bell* which had given to the world the first news of Bakunin's escape. In the New Year it triumphantly announced, in capital letters, Bakunin's safe arrival in London; and in the following issue there was a long editorial article which ended by declaring that "Bakunin and we are agents of the Russian people". A month later *The Bell* published in a special supplement Bakunin's first public utterance for thirteen years—a manifesto *To my Russian, Polish, and Other Slav Friends*. It was an attempt to refurbish his old programme of revolutionary nationalism in the light of his experiences in 1848-9. In the past, he declared, he had dissipated his energies in foreign lands. But neither in France nor in Germany had he struck any roots. In the "great times" which were approaching he would devote himself exclusively to the service of his own kinsmen. He was resolved to give the rest of his life to the struggle "for Russian freedom, for Polish freedom, for the liberation and independence of all the Slavs". There was nothing

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiv. 429-30; xvi. 240.

particularly new or striking in the article itself. But its publication was taken as a proof that *The Bell* had accepted Bakunin's programme, and that Bakunin had become a third member of the alliance.¹

The article was incomplete, and its concluding words promised a further instalment. But before it was finished, the first transport of reunion had had time to cool; and the dream of the revolutionary triumvirate faded imperceptibly away. About the end of March 1862, Bakunin wrote a further article which was duly sent to the printer. Whether it was the promised continuation of the manifesto *To my Russian, Polish, and Other Slav Friends* or a separate article is not clear; but in any case, when Herzen saw it in proof, he refused to publish it in *The Bell*. The article has not survived, and only Bakunin's answer to the refusal has been preserved.

To make a move against you [he wrote to Herzen and Ogarev jointly] or even independently of you, without first trying every means to realise complete agreement, if such can be attained by the sacrifice of all vanity and even by the sacrifice of convictions of second-rate importance, would be in my eyes a crime, all the more since we are, it appears, in complete agreement about the goal and differ perhaps only about ways and means. It would be not only a crime, but sheer folly. I have not lost a jot of the faith with which I came to London, or of the firm intention to become, at all costs, a third in your alliance—that is the one condition in which union is possible. Otherwise, we will be associates and, if you like, friends, but completely independent and not responsible for one another.

It was a situation which scarcely permitted of a clear-cut decision. Bakunin and Herzen could not simply agree to go their several ways and leave each other in peace. They were too closely associated in their own thoughts, and in the eyes of the world, for a parting to take place without bitterness and embarrassment. Except for two trivial notes, nothing further from Bakunin's pen ever appeared in *The Bell*. In May Herzen ominously defined their relationship as "friendly and allied proximity". Bakunin accepted this definition as an earnest that "there will be no further personal explanations between us". But the hope was not fulfilled. The political differences which

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xi. 346; xv. 11, 17-21; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 392-5.

will be described in the next chapter acted as a constant irritant, inflaming—and being in turn inflamed by—those temperamental incompatibilities which had been so obvious from the outset. In June recriminations began again, and there were incessant quarrels and “explanations”. Bakunin found Herzen’s treatment of himself “haughty” and “contemptuous”. Herzen wrote a barbed retort in which he seems to have suggested (the letter has not survived) that Bakunin would be well advised to transfer his residence and his activities to Paris. Bakunin’s apology was prompt and handsome:

My fault, Herzen. I beg of you, don’t be angry. Through my inveterate clumsiness I let slip a bitter word when there was no bitter feeling in my heart. But suppose it had fallen to *your* lot to receive all the notes you have written to me? You would long ago have wished me not in Paris, but in Calcutta. But joking apart, you must know, Herzen, that my respect for you has no bounds, and that I sincerely love you. I will add, without any *arrière-pensée* and with entire conviction, that I place you higher than myself in every respect, in abilities and knowledge, and that for me in every question your opinion carries immense weight. So why should you want to banish me to Paris, even if we had had a chance difference of secondary importance?

From the practical standpoint, Herzen was perfectly right. It was impossible to work with Bakunin. But human sympathy is a little on the side of “big Liza”. Bakunin’s outbursts of temper were like the evanescent anger of an affectionate child. Herzen’s resentment was reinforced with all the resources of reason; and once it had been aroused, time served to envenom rather than to allay its stored-up bitterness.¹

The story of Bakunin’s life in London resolves itself into a series of indistinct and fragmentary pictures. He had few connexions with the native population and left little or no impression on it. His achievements and his sufferings had made his name known in English radical circles. Some days after his arrival, a delegation of working-men waited on him at Orsett House to congratulate him on his escape; and the address presented to him on this occasion was printed in an obscure and

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 79-83; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xv. 194.

short-lived radical weekly *The Cosmopolitan Review*. No further contact between Bakunin and the English Labour movement, then in its infancy, is recorded. It would, indeed, have been difficult to find much common ground, or many points of mutual understanding, between the practical, hard-headed fathers of English trade unionism and the mercurial and visionary apostle of universal revolution. Bakunin neither had nor sought any knowledge of English life or politics. He thought that the power of the British aristocracy was almost as noxious as that of the Russian autocracy; and when he was informed (he never visited the English countryside) that English "peasants" seldom or never owned any land, he declared emphatically that their position was worse than that of Russian serfs before the emancipation.¹

In other English circles Bakunin's name had been less amiably remembered; and this led to one of the most disagreeable episodes of his stay in London. In August 1853, when he had been safely lodged for more than two years in the Peter-and-Paul fortress, a "foreign correspondent" of the London *Morning Advertiser*, who was in fact the Russian exile Golovin, casually referred to Michael Bakunin as "one of the Tsar's victims". A few days later this mention provoked a letter to the same paper which declared that, far from languishing in a Russian jail, the alleged "victim" was serving in the Russian army in the Caucasus, since he was "far too valuable a tool to be kept in prison". The writer of this letter was a certain Francis Marx, a follower of the well-known English Turcophile and Russophobe David Urquhart. He quoted no authority for his remarkable allegation. But its similarity to the slander published five years earlier in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, the curious coincidence of name, and finally, Karl Marx's known predilection for Urquhart, created in *émigré* circles—and probably also in Herzen's mind—the erroneous impression that Karl Marx had some share of responsibility for the revival of this ancient calumny; and this impression was not removed by a rather grudging disclaimer from Marx himself. The affair soon died away and was forgotten. But in March 1862, two months after Bakunin's arrival in London, Urquhart's own journal, the *Free*

¹ Herzen, ed. Lemke, xv. 15; Sutherland Edwards, *The Russians at Home and the Russians Abroad*, ii. 25.

Press, published an anonymous article once more alleging that Michael Bakunin was an agent of the Russian Government.

Bakunin did not see the article himself. But within a week his attention was drawn to it from two sources: by his old acquaintance Arnold Ruge, now living in solemn retirement at Brighton, and by the head of the delegation of workers whom he had received at Orsett House. Bakunin wrote appropriately indignant replies to both; and the next issue of the *Working-Man* contained a eulogistic article entitled *Bakunin in London*. With this article, and with a protest by Herzen in the *Free Press*, the scandal once more died away. But the most problematical—and, in view of later developments, most important—aspect of the whole episode is Bakunin's attitude towards Karl Marx. Herzen, who did not love Marx and who remembered the 1853 incident, referred to this new attack, in a private letter to Reichel, as the work of "Germans and an English maniac"; and it would have been strange if the Germanophobe Bakunin had failed to share Herzen's suspicions. If, however, he did, he bore Marx no malice. In his extant letters of this date he shows no disposition to blame anyone but Urquhart for the libel; and he met Marx with complete cordiality two and a half years later. It was long afterwards, when his quarrel with Marx had become the subject of acrimonious public controversy, that Bakunin described how he had been "greeted" in London by "a whole series of articles in a small English newspaper, evidently written or inspired by my dear and honourable friends, the leaders of the German communists". Of Marx's complicity in the affair there is no shred of evidence.¹

For the rest, Bakunin's contacts with English life were trivial and accidental. It was the year of the International Exhibition—an attempt to repeat at South Kensington the glories of the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park eleven years before. But Bakunin betrayed no interest in it; and of the amusements of London it is only recorded that Tchorzewski once took him to see the "living statues" at the Eldorado Music Hall. He had no English friends and few English acquaintances. He no doubt visited Koe at his house in Blackheath; for later in the year he was using that address (when the address of Mrs. Welch in

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, vii. 303-6, 314-16; xv. 71, 126-7, 129-31; Ruge, *Briefwechsel*, ii. 218-19.

Paddington Green had been compromised) for receiving letters from abroad. At another moment, he was asking that letters for him should be sent to Mr. Ralston at the British Museum—the sole remaining trace of a link with the scholar who afterwards made his name as the first translator into English of Turgenev and other Russian classics. Of Bakunin's other English connexions little more is known. William Linton, a wood-engraver, one of the few English partisans of the international democratic movement, who had welcomed to London political exiles of many nations, and who met Bakunin at Herzen's table, found him "a stalwart, unbroken giant (six foot two or four), cheerful and humorous for all his sufferings". Sutherland Edwards, the journalist, whom professional curiosity attracted to all things Russian, did not admire the political opinions of the new arrival, who "had a strong objection to everything". But this disapproval evidently did not preclude some degree of personal attachment; for the most lively anecdote of Bakunin's sojourn in London relates to an occasion when he was staying in the Edwards' house. The solicitous hostess, observing that her guest was wearing continuously a red flannel shirt of dubious cleanliness, and had evidently brought no change with him, instructed the maid-servant to steal into his room at daybreak while he was still asleep, remove the offending article and wash and return it by the time he was ready to get up. The stratagem broke down on a vital point. The red flannel garment served equally as a night-shirt.¹

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Bakunin never acquired more than a smattering of spoken English, and his meetings with foreigners in London were naturally more numerous and more fruitful than with the natives. In addition to the extensive colony of foreign exiles settled in London since the upheavals of 1848-9, the Exhibition attracted from abroad hosts of politically minded, or merely curious, travellers. Of these the most exalted was Prince Jerome Bonaparte, Napoleon III's cousin, whose marriage three years

¹ Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 36, 75; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 96; Linton, *European Republicans*, p. 276; Sutherland Edwards, *The Russians at Home and the Russians Abroad*, ii. 26. The incident of the shirt was communicated to the writer by Professor Gilbert Murray, who heard it from Sutherland Edwards.

before to the daughter of King Victor Emmanuel had sealed the compact between the Emperor and Cavour. During his visit, Prince Jerome, who combined the French official sympathy for Poland with a somewhat ostentatious profession of liberal principles, expressed a desire to meet some of the leading Poles and their sympathisers. A luncheon was arranged to which Bakunin, Herzen, and Ogarev were invited. The luncheon was private, and no record has unfortunately been preserved of what passed. But according to Kelsiev, who was also present, Michael developed various "economic and revolutionary theories", and the august guest somewhat rashly proffered the services of the French consulates in Eastern Europe for the dissemination of revolutionary literature and proclamations. The promise, if made, was not kept; and the course of history and of Bakunin's opinions remained unaffected by the banquet. Bakunin was presumably conscious of no incongruity when, a few months later, he attended the funeral of Simon Bernard, Orsini's accomplice in the attempt on Napoleon III's life in 1857, and delivered a laudatory oration on the deceased conspirator.¹

Of the travellers who sought out Michael Bakunin in London in the summer of 1862 the majority were, not unnaturally, Slavs. Many of his Russian and Polish visitors were deeply involved in those dreams of revolution in Russia and Poland which began once more to germinate in Michael's restless brain. Other visitors brought back to him memories of a cause which had long been near his heart—the liberation of the Slavs of Central Europe. It had been the main preoccupation of his last months of freedom in 1849. It was his first thought when he emerged from the twilight of Siberia.

The destruction, the utter destruction of the Austrian Empire [he wrote to Herzen from San Francisco] will be my last word—I do not say my last deed, that would savour too much of vanity. . . . And after that comes the glorious, free Slav federation—the only way out for Russia, the Ukraine, Poland, and all the Slav peoples.

In the world of 1849, which lived on in Bakunin's imagination, the fabric of the Austrian Empire was visibly tottering. Its overthrow seemed no unreasonable ambition; and it would provide the key to the complex of problems which Bakunin

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xv. 366, 505.

had made it his business to solve.¹

For some weeks in the London of 1862, Bakunin continued to nurse this thirteen-year-old ideal. The aristocratic leaders of the Czech national movement had become "completely German" and must be discarded. The national revolution must be based on co-operation between "the educated youth" and "the people". When this revolution had been realised, the time would come for a pan-Slav federation including Russia. Bakunin met once more his old associate Adolf Straka, who had fled to London after the disasters of 1849. Straka was earning his living by teaching and writing, had become a British subject, and was perhaps no longer a very fervent champion of Slav nationalism. Joseph Frič was also an exile, and was conducting Czech national propaganda in Paris and Geneva. Through Straka, Bakunin discovered that a brother of Frič, Vyacheslav by name, was still in Prague. He wrote a letter to Vyacheslav Frič, enclosing in it an open letter to Joseph, which set forth the Slav programme outlined above and which was evidently designed to revive the revolutionary national movement in Bohemia itself. These letters, however, failed to reach those for whom they were intended.

It was indeed a forlorn hope. Even Bakunin, the inveterate dreamer, could not fail to perceive that the world no longer stood where it had stood in 1849. The Emperor Francis-Joseph was comfortably and solidly established on the Austrian throne. He had survived the shock of Villafranca and come to terms with Napoleon III about Italy. He had apparently no more loyal subjects than the Slavs. In England everyone was an enthusiastic partisan of Italian liberty. But nobody had so much as heard of the wrongs or the aspirations of Czechs, Croats, or Slovaks. Vyacheslav Frič came to London for the Exhibition, and Bakunin presumably met him there. But the meeting has not been recorded. No revival of Czech revolutionary nationalism was discernible. As the year 1862 went on, Bakunin became more and more deeply involved in the affairs of Poland; and the Slavs of Central Europe slipped out of his active consciousness.²

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 75-6.

² Lemke, *Očerki*, pp. 88-9, 485-95. The information regarding the movements of the Frič brothers and Adolf Straka was communicated to the writer by Dr. Czechjan of Prague.

Bakunin's preoccupation with the Slav cause had, however, profoundly influenced his attitude to the two most important national groups of *émigrés* in London—the Germans and the Italians. The wave of Germanophobia which swept over Bakunin during his first months in London presents a curious psychological problem. There had been no marked trace of it before his imprisonment. It made its first prominent appearance in the *Confession*, where it was heavily stressed for the benefit of Nicholas I. But it is one of the most convincing measures of the quasi-sincerity of that document that the anti-German pose, though it there served an interested motive, was sufficiently congenial to his temper to remain part of his emotional baggage even when it had outlived its utility. Bakunin in London was frank enough about his change of attitude. "Now I shall no longer attempt to reconcile the Slavs with the Germans, as I did in Bohemia in 1849", he wrote in May 1862; and in the open letter to Frič of the same date, he declares that "pan-Slavism means, in its negative aspect, hatred of the Germans". A month later, in a letter to his sister-in-law, Natalie Bakunin, he is still more explicit:

I am busy solely with the Polish, the Russian, and the pan-Slav cause, and am preaching, systematically and with fervent conviction, hatred of the Germans. I say, as Voltaire said of God, that if there were no Germans, we should have to invent them, since nothing so successfully unites the Slavs as a rooted hatred of them.

At no other stage of his career does Bakunin give vent to such bitter racial hatred. Even the later anti-Semitic utterances prompted by his quarrel with Marx and Utin are less sweeping and less savage.

It is difficult to guess how far these outbursts of Germanophobia are attributable to the influence of Herzen. The German *émigrés* in London provoked some of Herzen's most scathing sallies. They fully reciprocated his antipathy; and all relations between them had ceased for many years. Herzen probably encouraged Bakunin to suspect Marx's hand in the libels of the *Morning Advertiser* and the *Free Press*. The only German in England who, so far as our records go, took any notice at all of Bakunin's arrival was Arnold Ruge, with whom he exchanged polite, but formal, letters. It is not clear that they met. There is

extant a letter to the poet Freiligrath in which Ruge makes a half-hearted attempt to defend Bakunin on the ground that, though a supporter of pan-Slavism, he is not a Russian patriot.¹

Pan-Slav enthusiasm was also a dominant factor in Bakunin's dealings with the Italians. Mazzini, the quiet, unflinching fanatic, was not only the doyen of all the political exiles in London, having more than twenty years' residence to his credit, but stood nearer than any of them to Herzen and Ogarev. In later years Bakunin came into conflict with the Italian leader's quasi-national, quasi-religious mysticism. But now ardent nationalism formed a link between them. Bakunin saw Mazzini "very often", "liked and respected him", and evidently received from him corresponding assurances of sympathy.

Italy [he writes in the open letter to Frič] is the only irreconcilable enemy of Austria. Italy, old though she may be, is far younger than the other Western peoples. She has within herself the pledge of a living future, which will draw her involuntarily towards the Slav peoples. Italy, as I know from sure sources, is beginning to take special, exclusive notice of the Slavs, and has the serious intention to unite with us. Italy is our only friend in Europe.

"The hatred of Slavs for Germans", he wrote at the same time to Garibaldi, "corresponds exactly to the hatred of Italy for Austria; and as the latter powerfully assisted the union of Italy, so hatred of the Germans is uniting the Slavs." To another correspondent Bakunin wrote that he was contemplating a journey to Italy, where he would "work to link Italians with the Slavs". But this interesting project was not realised. When Bakunin at length left England, it was for another destination.²

But Bakunin, immersed in the new life of London, could not forget the old personal ties of the past. There were perhaps special reasons why his brothers could display little active interest in his fate. Alexander, the youngest but one, was in Western Europe at the time of Michael's escape. Alexander was still pursuing his career as the family scapegrace, had involved

¹ Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 90, 490; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 8; Ruge, *Briefwechsel*, ii. 218, 221.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 292; Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 86-8, 492; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 277.

himself in a disreputable love-affair, and had tried to shoot himself in Florence. In the middle of January 1862 he came over to London to visit his brother. But the reunion was not a success. "We met", wrote Michael afterwards, "and understood nothing of each other." Herzen found Alexander's utterances as "heavy as iron coated with lead", nicknamed him, for some obscure reason, "Dromedary Bakunin", and enquired of Turgenev whether, in the course of his career as a sportsman, he had ever come across a "more boring animal". In any case Alexander could be of no financial assistance; for a few weeks later he himself was stranded in Italy without sufficient money to return home. Meanwhile, a more glorious fate overtook Michael's other brothers. In an access of liberal enthusiasm, Nicholas and Alexis joined in a petition to the Tsar from thirteen landowners in the province of Tver, who ventured to express their dissatisfaction with the conditions of the emancipation of the serfs, and offered to take upon themselves the financial burdens placed by the decree on the peasants from their estates. Such audacity was clearly inadmissible, and the signatories of the petition were consigned for several months to the Peter-and-Paul fortress. Only Paul remained at liberty and in Russia; and he, through caution or indifference, did not write to Michael. Varvara was dead, Alexandra married, and Tatyana silent. Michael's only link with Premukhino was Paul's wife, Natalie, the niece of General Korsakov.¹

A pathetic note dominates the numerous letters from Michael to Natalie Bakunin, the one member of the family whom he had never seen. He begs for news of his sisters and his mother, since he has long ceased to expect letters from them. He feels like one "condemned to live in isolation from what he has loved his whole life". He is tired of "theory". Cast upon a foreign shore, he thirsts only for "love, living love"; and love is now personified for him in the Polish girl he had left behind in the middle of Siberia.

Dear brothers and sisters [he wrote to Natalie in April 1862], I have only one request to make of you. Help me to get my wife, first from Irkutsk to Premukhino, and then from Premukhino to London. When you know her, I think you will love her; she really deserves it. But that is not the point. I love her and need her.

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xv. 48-9, 54; Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 23, 124, 127-8.

In June he wrote to Antonia herself:

My heart is aching for you. Day and night I dream only of you. As soon as you join me, we will go together to Italy. There it will be cheerful and gayer, and there will be plenty of work. Don't be afraid, my heart, you shall have a servant-girl and there will be enough to live on—only come!

The emotion which had led him into his strange marriage at Tomsk was still master of his heart in London.¹

It is not surprising that neither Michael's brothers nor his friends felt any enthusiasm for a marriage contracted in abnormal conditions, between an elderly and broken man, suffering from a notorious incapacity, and the daughter of a small Polish merchant, a girl not out of her teens. The family at Premukhino showed no eagerness to take Antonia to their hearts, and still less to finance her journey. Herzen could never take any project of Bakunin's quite seriously; and even the more tolerant Turgenev thought it madness to send for his wife until he had had time to "look around". Antonia herself seems to have had some natural scruples about embarking on an arduous journey across two continents before she knew that her material prospects were assured in the strange and distant land to which she was bidden. Throughout the summer, Bakunin worked assiduously to remove these various obstacles. He persuaded Turgenev, who visited London for a few days in May 1862, to "lend" his brothers 200 roubles, and a rich Armenian named Nalbandyan to provide a further 300 roubles. He wheedled a promise of £80 out of Herzen, whose generosity was seldom quenched by his scepticism. Whatever more was needed his brothers must supply. With superb self-confidence, Michael assured them that it was the last demand he would ever make on them. They did not perhaps believe him; but they yielded at length to his importunities. In September, Antonia received an invitation to Premukhino and funds for the first stage of her journey.²

Even now there were more delays. In May, Bakunin had himself written to General Korsakov begging that his wife might be

¹ Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 26-7, 120, 127; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 20.

² *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xv. 52, 110; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 93-4; Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 25, 165-6; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 552; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 21.

allowed to join him. But the General was absent on a summer tour of the Amur. The authorities in Petersburg seemed uncertain whether to agree with Bakunin's view that "a man with a wife is less dangerous than a man without a wife"; and Bakunin declared that, if a passport were refused, he would employ his friends to abduct Antonia secretly from Irkutsk. This exciting alternative did not, however, prove necessary. In November, Antonia started on her way. She spent Christmas and the New Year at Premukhino; and in February 1863 she left Russia, cautiously escorted to the frontier by a police officer. Before the final departure she was required to sign a declaration that she was carrying no letters or papers, and would never return to Russia.¹

¹ Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 26, 78, 171; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, ii. 554.

CHAPTER 20

POLITICAL AMBITIONS

BAKUNIN had arrived in London, at the end of 1861, at a critical juncture in Russian history. The emancipation of the serfs in the preceding spring was the climax of a long crescendo of expectation. Ever since the loss of the Crimean war and the accession of Alexander II, the mass of Russian opinion, at home and abroad, had been united on the necessity for reform. *The Bell* voiced these combined aspirations and, though officially excluded from Russia, became the half-tolerated organ of Russian liberalism. For five years the reformers carried all before them, and the reactionaries were reduced to silent and surreptitious obstruction. But once the pinnacle had been reached and the emancipation of the serfs was an accomplished fact, there was a significant pause. The rejoicings were scarcely over before critics on both sides began to take stock of the situation. Some thought that reform, having achieved this well-advertised success, could safely rest on its laurels for another generation. Others, whose democratic appetites had been whetted, not satisfied, felt that autocracy was on the run and that now, if ever, was the time to press for fresh concessions. Russian opinion began to split once more into conservative and radical camps. During the summer of 1861 some young radicals founded a political secret society; and in the autumn there were disturbances among the students which led to the closing of the University of Petersburg. Timid liberals were frightened, and the police inspired to new measures of vigilance. Agitation and conspiracy on the one side were matched by suspicion and repression on the other. The hostile forces were ranging themselves under the time-honoured banners of reaction and revolution. The liberal interlude of the later 'fifties had run its course.

When Bakunin reached London, the symptoms of the new alinement were as yet barely discernible. The split between the liberalism of Herzen and the radicalism or "nihilism" (the word was just coming into fashion) of the new generation was not yet

apparent; and Bakunin, like Herzen himself, could still believe that Herzen and the revolutionaries represented the same cause. But events forced the issue. In the spring of 1862, destructive fires broke out in Petersburg, and were officially attributed (though almost certainly without foundation) to the "nihilists". A new secret society sprang up under the characteristic title *Young Russia*, and issued a proclamation in the name of a "central revolutionary committee". In the turmoil which followed the Petersburg fires, Herzen reaped the full fruits of an equivocal position. The official press, led by Bakunin's old enemy, the renegade liberal Katkov, for the first time openly attacked Herzen as the true begetter of nihilism; and a girl student fresh from Petersburg called at Orsett House to enquire whether he had really been responsible for setting the capital on fire. Herzen, morbidly sensitive to such criticism, tried to redress the balance and to demonstrate his impartiality by denouncing the *Young Russia* manifesto as untimely and "un-Russian". But this middle course alienated the revolutionaries without placating the conservatives; and the circulation of *The Bell* suffered a sharp decline. Herzen, with a sinking heart, read the danger signals to Right and Left. He was a man of moderation; and he was doomed to the fate of moderate men in times of crisis. "The liberal party", he wrote gloomily to a correspondent in August, "will be ground out of existence between the two wheels."¹

But while Herzen hesitated at the parting of the ways, and Ogarev moved timidly towards the Left, Bakunin knew nothing of gloom or hesitation or timidity. When he burst upon Orsett House on that December evening of 1861, he had seemed to Herzen an anachronism from a half-forgotten past. Since then, the position had been rapidly reversed. The prison years had obliterated a whole decade from Bakunin's life. He had skipped altogether the liberal period so indissolubly associated with the name of Herzen and *The Bell*. He passed straight from the revolutionary 'forties to the revolutionary 'sixties, and was conscious only of the continuity between them. By the autumn of 1862, Herzen, still plodding along the blind alley of constitutional reform, had become a figure of the past. Bakunin, who could not imagine progress except in terms of revolution, was

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xi. 226; xiv. 382; xv. 391.

in the van of the new advance. The dilemma which paralysed Herzen held no terrors for him. He was as irrevocably an extremist as Herzen was a moderate. He hated nothing so much as middle courses. Once the dividing line between revolutionaries and moderates was clearly drawn, there could be no more doubt in 1862 than there had been in 1848 on which side of it he would range himself.

In the issue between Bakunin and Herzen, this fundamental difference of direction was reinforced by an almost equally fundamental difference of method. Herzen was not only a moderate, but a publicist. For more than four years before Bakunin's arrival in London, he had worked steadily, and on the whole effectively, through the medium of public opinion. He had sought no disciples, founded no party, engaged in no form of political activity other than the announcement of his views. For more than four years, hundreds of copies of *The Bell* had been smuggled into Russia by returning travellers or through the post. Herzen, who detested secrecy, had never found it necessary to organise any system of surreptitious communication. He had left both those who supplied him with information, and those who desired to procure his publications, to find their own means of doing so.

All this seemed to Bakunin sheer diletantism. Bakunin had the contempt of the self-styled man of action for the slow forces of publicity. The publicist could appeal only to the aristocracy and the intelligentsia; for the people everywhere—and especially in Russia—were for the most part illiterate. The people must be approached by other means. In 1848 Michael had learned to reject as futile all forms of open and avowed revolutionary organisation. In the last months of his liberty he had made the first rudimentary experiments in subterranean conspiracy. Now in 1862 he took up with renewed enthusiasm the work which he had abandoned perforce thirteen years before. In 1849 he had dreamed of covering Bohemia with a network of revolutionary conspirators. Now he transferred his ambition to the wider field of Russia itself. Bakunin was not merely a believer in revolution as a means to an end. He was an artist in conspiracy and intrigue, and loved them for their own sake. Everywhere he would have secret agents, whose ultimate aim would be the organisation of revolution, and whose immediate task was the distribu-

tion of the publications of Herzen's Russian press. He himself would be the director-general of the movement. Herzen would be its pamphleteer.

Unhappily, Bakunin's plans for the execution of this design were as elementary as the conception of the design itself. There were many Russian visitors to London in this year of the International Exhibition; and any of them who crossed Michael's path were likely to find themselves enrolled, almost before they knew it themselves, as his agents. They were men of most diverse calibre. Some, like Nalbandyan, who helped Michael with money for his wife's journey, were inspired by genuine sympathy for the revolutionary cause and knew what they were about. Others, like a certain Marquis de Traversi, had visited the exiles, like so many other Russian tourists, out of sheer curiosity; and a young journalist named Voronov alleged that he had come to London to see the Exhibition, and that his meeting with Bakunin was purely fortuitous. But all of them were fish for Bakunin's net. He accepted them without scrutiny, and sometimes almost against their own will. He would listen to no objections, and take no refusal. He loaded them with commissions and instructions, gave them handfuls of illicit literature to take back with them to Russia, and promised them codes for secret communication with him. Thus armed, these light-hearted and sometimes light-headed emissaries were launched into the jaws of the elaborate and ruthless system of the Russian secret police.

Several of Bakunin's codes have survived. They are of touching simplicity. In the earliest of them, Herzen is "private gentleman" or "private", Herzen's son "junior", and Ogarev "the poet"—disguises which can scarcely have misled the least instructed police officer. Then follows something slightly more abstruse, in which Herzen becomes "Baron Tiesenhausen", Ogarev "Kosterov", a prison a "café", a Turk a "shoemaker", and so forth. In another Bakunin himself becomes "Brykalov", and writes of himself in the third person; and incongruous sentences about the fall in the price of salt, or the rise in wheat, are inserted in the text in the wild hope of creating the outward semblance of a business letter. But Bakunin ignored the most elementary rules of the game. He would write a letter in code, and enclose the code in the letter. He would begin a letter in

plain language and continue it in code, marking the transition by "Or no! I had better write by the dictionary". These naïve proceedings rob Bakunin of any claim to be considered a serious conspirator. "Big Liza" played at cryptograms in the same innocent spirit of make-believe in which his three-year-old namesake played with her dolls.¹

The results for his correspondents were, however, less harmless. The last few months had seen a rapid transformation in the easy-going tolerance which the Russian authorities had extended, since Alexander's accession to the throne, towards the exiles in London. The editors of *The Bell*, now reinforced by the embittered agitator fresh from Peter-and-Paul, Schlüsselburg, and Siberia, were to be treated henceforth as public enemies. A police spy was sent to London to report on their activities and their associates, and had no difficulty in insinuating himself into the somewhat indiscriminate receptions which Herzen gave at Orsett House on Wednesdays and Sundays. By these means the authorities learned that a certain Vetoshnikov, a merchant on a visit to London, would bring back with him to Petersburg at the beginning of July a number of letters from the exiles to sympathisers in Russia. Vetoshnikov duly crossed the frontier on July 5th, 1862, and was at once arrested.²

The arrest of Vetoshnikov was the starting-point of a prolonged police enquiry in which thirty-two persons were eventually implicated. The correspondence found on him included two code letters from Bakunin to Nalbandyan, a letter from Bakunin to Natalie Bakunin, letters from Herzen and Ogarev to Nicholas Serno-Solovievich, the principal organiser of *Land and Liberty*, which was the most serious political secret society of the time. Serno-Solovievich and Nalbandyan were at once placed under arrest; and in the latter's possession were found no less than five letters from Bakunin in various codes and one from Turgenev. Among those mentioned in these letters as carriers of secret correspondence were Voronov and the Marquis de Traversi. Both these were in turn arrested; and a search of the Marquis's flat brought to light a further batch of Bakunin's letters to various addressees—to his wife, to Natalie Bakunin, to Nalbandyan, and to Turgenev—as well as a letter

¹ Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 28, 75, 78-81, 106, 115-16, 130.

² Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 20-21.

to Bakunin from his wife. All these had been cheerfully accepted by the light-hearted Marquis, who seems, however, to have taken no steps to deliver them.¹

In the meanwhile the Russian authorities had another wind-fall. At the end of May 1862, Bakunin had, in the same care-free spirit, entrusted to two other Russian travellers, who were returning home by way of Northern Italy and Austria, a packet of letters for correspondents in those countries. Among them were letters from Bakunin to Garibaldi and to his secretary, and the letters to the brothers Frič mentioned in the previous chapter. The travellers, Nichiporenko and Potekhin, safely reached Pescieri on the Austrian frontier. But here Nichiporenko, in whose possession the letters were, had an attack of nerves. Having attempted in vain to induce his companion to take charge of the compromising documents, he hastily threw them under a bench in the Customs House, and proceeded on his journey. He could not have committed a worse folly. Some days later the Austrian authorities discovered the discarded papers. An examination soon revealed the nature of the documents and the identity of their bearer. At the beginning of August, copies of them were forwarded by the Austrian authorities to the Russian police in Petersburg, and were added to the existing dossier; and Nichiporenko quickly joined the other incriminated persons in prison.²

So much evidence gave the authorities food for many months of thought and investigation. Depositions were taken from all those under arrest. A questionnaire was sent to Turgenev in Paris. His answer was deemed insufficient, and he was summoned in the spring of 1863 to Petersburg for further cross-examination, in the course of which he displayed an unheroic eagerness to dissociate himself from the opinions of his former friends. De Traversi went insane under the ordeal and died in a military hospital, accusing his wife of infidelity and the Tsar of secret relations with Bakunin. The wretched Nichiporenko died in prison about the same time. Not until December 1864, when many of the thirty-two accused had been in confinement for upwards of two years, did the Senate deliver judgment. Serno-Solovievich was sentenced to twelve years' hard labour

¹ Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 24-8, 75-83, 92, 120-35.

² Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 85-92, 108-12.

followed by permanent exile to Siberia, Vetoshnikov to permanent exile to Siberia. Nalbandyan was to live in a provincial town under police supervision. Turgenev and Voronov were among those acquitted.

Such was the inauspicious end of Bakunin's first attempt to establish a revolutionary organisation in Russia. Many months passed before news of what had happened filtered through to London. By that time Bakunin was too absorbed in other things to pay much attention to Herzen's reproach that he had "ruined his friends with his chatter".¹

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But these unhappy intrigues did not exhaust Bakunin's efforts to promote the cause of revolution in Russia. Two further experiments initiated during his first six months in London illustrate the spasmodic and incoherent nature of his activities and the growing tension of his relations with Herzen.

The first of these episodes owed its inception to a curious coincidence. On the eve of Bakunin's arrival in London, Herzen received a visit from Bishop Paphnutius of the Russian sect of Old Believers, who had come to London to establish contact between the religious dissenters and the political exiles. Among the revolutionary exploits of the Old Believers, Paphnutius mentioned the presence of one of their priests at the Prague Congress. Herzen was not particularly moved by this reminiscence. But Bakunin, when he heard the story, was strangely excited. He had probably not thought of Miloradov, his foxy old colleague at the Congress, since he wrote his *Confession* in the Peter-and-Paul fortress. But now he forgot his contemptuous disparagement of Miloradov, and remembered only that fleeting hope which had come to him in Prague of using the Old Believers to stir up revolution among the Russian peasants. He was back in the great days of 1848. Here was a fruitful field for those revolutionary capacities which had rusted in idleness for thirteen years. He determined to cultivate Paphnutius.

The bishop was lodging in Fulham with Kelsiev, who has bequeathed to posterity a somewhat satirical account of the first interview. Bakunin mounted the stairs with slow and heavy tread, intoning in his powerful bass voice the Russian church

¹ Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 142, 182, 221-3; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 492.

canticle "Lord, when Thou wast baptized in Jordan". This melodramatic introduction failed to impress the shrewd priest, who detected in it a note of charlatanism. But Bakunin was undaunted in his desire to please. On shipboard, he had convinced the English clergyman Koe of his sympathy for Protestantism. He now assured the dissenting Russian bishop of his lively interest in the doctrinal differences which separated the Old Believers from the Orthodox Church, and hinted that it would need very little persuasion to make him join the sect. The salvation of souls, he declared with conviction, was no jesting matter; and he launched into a garish vision of the future in which salvation and revolution became twin sisters, and the Old Believers overthrew the Orthodox Church, and the Tsar declared himself an Old Believer.

Beneath every superficial difference there was a certain similarity of character between this strangely matched pair. Both knew that they were pursuing divergent and incompatible ideals. But each was seeking, by a nicely compounded blend of naïvety and cunning, to lead the other by the nose and use him for his own purposes. Of the two, the bishop was clearly the more worldly and the less gullible. He did not remain much longer in London to listen to Bakunin's blandishments. But in the spring of 1862, Kelsiev went on a secret visit to Russia; and as the result of his investigations there, it was decided to issue an occasional supplement to *The Bell* specially devoted to the affairs of the Old Believers. These supplements, which were edited by Ogarev, appeared with fair regularity for two years; and Bakunin, whose influence is clearly visible in these proceedings, missed no opportunity of writing and speaking of the Old Believers as a great revolutionary force.¹

Herzen's attitude was marked by his customary detachment. He was too sceptical and intellectually too uncompromising to have much tolerance for the Russian sects. But he prided himself on making *The Bell* a forum for the grievances of every oppressed class in Russia; and he perhaps calculated that the folly could not assume alarming proportions if it were taken under his wing. He disapproved of Kelsiev's mission to Russia. But he presumably supplied the necessary funds. It was the first, but not the last, occasion on which Bakunin's enthusiasm

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xv. 342-53, 398.

and Ogarev's amiability induced Herzen to lend his name and money to an enterprise which his better judgment would have rejected. Retribution was delayed for two years. Then, early in 1864, probably as the result of a bargain with the Tsarist Government, the Metropolitan of the Old Believers issued a Pastoral Letter in which he denounced the "evil-minded atheists settled in London" as agents of "that most impious vessel of Satan, Voltaire", and clearly demonstrated that the letters of the Russian word for "Free-thinkers" added up to the Number of the Beast. The comedy was played out. Ogarev's supplement to *The Bell* ceased to appear; and Bakunin referred no more to the revolutionary virtues of the Old Believers.¹

If the Old Believers were a mere interlude in Bakunin's revolutionary career, the next episode is not so much an interlude as a deviation. It illustrates not only the rashness of his enthusiasm, but the extreme fluidity of his opinions. In the autumn of 1861 Herzen had been visited by a Russian peasant named Martyanov. Born a serf, Martyanov had accumulated large savings through his business capacity, had purchased his freedom, and had been cheated and ruined over the transaction by his former master. Unable to obtain justice in Russia and burning with the sense of a grievance, he found his way to London and brought his tale of woe to Orsett House. It was seldom that the exiles in London had the privilege of welcoming an authentic representative of the "Russian people". Stimulated by contact with Herzen and with Bakunin, whomeanwhile arrived on the scene, Martyanov soon merged his personal injury in the wider grievance of the Russian people as a whole. In April 1862 he sent to the Tsar through the post a remarkable letter which was printed in one of the next numbers of *The Bell*. Martyanov retained enough of the tradition of his class to be a loyal supporter of the dynasty. Even in his bitterest complaints against the State which had denied him justice, he was unable to imagine Russian destinies presided over by anyone but a Romanov. The Russian people, he emphatically declared, loved their Tsar. But Romanov must become the "Tsar of the Russian Nation" instead of "Emperor" (a cold, foreign title) and "Auto-

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xv. 342-53, 398; xvi. 470-71.

crat". Martyanov appealed to Alexander to convoke a Russian National Assembly.¹

Both Bakunin and Herzen applauded this courageous gesture. But their private reactions were fundamentally different. Herzen treated Martyanov with kindly condescension. Bakunin was completely carried away by this naïve, upright Russian peasant. Anyone who, like Martyanov, reeked of his native soil, could strike in Bakunin's innermost soul a chord which failed to vibrate for intellectuals like Herzen or Turgenev. It was part of that inherent simplicity which distinguished Bakunin from every other radical and revolutionary of the time. Herzen idealised the Russian people, Marx the proletariat. But it is impossible to imagine Herzen borrowing his ideas from a farm labourer or Marx from a factory hand. Only Bakunin, the aristocrat, was sufficiently free from class-consciousness to be perfectly unconstrained in his relations with a former serf, and to find it as natural that he should be influenced by Martyanov as that Martyanov should be influenced by him.

A warm friendship sprang up between the two men over tea and tobacco at Paddington Green. Bakunin, faithfully seconding his new associate, began to collect signatures for a petition to the Tsar to convene a National Assembly; and he wrote for *The Bell* a long article which clearly reflected Martyanov's influence. He called it *The People's Cause: Romanov, Pugachev, or Pestel?* Russia had before her, he wrote, three alternatives: a revolution of the intelligentsia like that initiated by Pestel in December 1825; a peasant *jacquerie*, such as that led by Pugachev in the days of Catherine the Great; or a bloodless revolution sponsored by Alexander II. Unlike Herzen, Bakunin never believed in the revolutionary leadership of the *bourgeois* intelligentsia. The choice therefore lay between Alexander and a new Pugachev.

We will speak the truth. We should most gladly of all follow Romanov, if Romanov could and would transform himself from a Petersburg Emperor into a National Tsar. We should gladly enrol under his standard, because the Russian people still recognises him, and because his strength is concentrated, ready to act, and might become an irresistible strength if only he would give it a popular baptism. We would follow him because he *alone* could carry out and

¹ Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 335-50.

complete a great, peaceful revolution without shedding one drop of Russian or Slav blood.¹

There was nothing in this article contrary to Bakunin's fundamental principles. He had toyed for years with the idea of a revolutionary dictator. In the *Confession* he had offered the leadership of the revolution to Nicholas I. In Siberia he offered it to Muraviev. There was no reason why he should not now offer it to Alexander II. But Herzen, who did not know the *Confession* and had been merely bewildered by Bakunin's championship of Muraviev, could make nothing of this sudden elevation of the Romanov to the rôle of a revolutionary hero. He did not understand how an intelligent man like Bakunin could become the disciple of an ignorant peasant; and this *volte-face* seemed to him the crudest kind of opportunism. Herzen was a democrat. If he was momentarily prepared to temporise with Alexander, it could only be in the capacity of a constitutional sovereign. Bakunin's revolutionary dictatorship was an obscure and ill-defined conception. But it had, at any rate, nothing in common with constitutional monarchy. Bakunin was not, in Herzen's sense of the word, a democrat at all; and the National Assembly which he demanded was clearly not an organ of parliamentary democracy. Herzen called the article "a medley of Bakuninist demagoguery". Ogarev more mildly censured its "confused Tsarism". Martyanov, appealed to by Bakunin as "arbitrator", not unnaturally supported the article, and provoked Herzen's bitter mockery by declaring that Bakunin ought to be allowed to express his opinion "free from outside influence". Herzen was not impressed. He refused to print the article in *The Bell*; and a fresh element of discord was introduced into the uneasy relationship between him and Bakunin.²

The narrative of Bakunin's relations with Martyanov can be briefly completed. In the autumn of 1862 *The People's Cause* was published independently in London, and the schism thereby made visible for those who had eyes to see. Towards the end of the year Martyanov published a pamphlet entitled *The People and the State*, which anticipates some of the ideas subsequently embodied by Bakunin in his philosophy of

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 396-418.

² *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xv. 354, 549; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 148.

anarchism. In April 1863, when Bakunin had already left London, Martyanov, undeterred by Herzen's warnings, decided to return to Russia. A Russian peasant could find no permanent basis of existence outside his own country; and Martyanov was too upright and too unsophisticated to believe that the Tsar could doubt the sincerity of his devotion or resent his frankness. He was genuinely astonished when he found himself arrested at the frontier and condemned to five years' hard labour in Siberia. He died there in 1866, having paid dearly for his one short appearance on the historical stage.¹

In the meanwhile the face of Russian politics was being rapidly transformed. Underground organisations spread all over the country, the most important of them being Nicholas Serno-Solovievich's *Land and Liberty*. It is in the nature of things inevitable that few records of an outlawed secret society should have survived, and much of the story of *Land and Liberty* remains obscure. But the foundations of the organisation seem to have been laid during a visit by Serno-Solovievich to London in September 1861. The name *Land and Liberty* was composed of Herzen's two favourite slogans, and was directly taken from an article of Ogarev in *The Bell*, which began: "What do the people need? It is very simple. The people need Land and Liberty." It is clear that Ogarev was from the outset an ardent adherent, and that everything was done by the organisers to make it difficult for Herzen to withhold his sympathy and support. In Bakunin they had at first less confidence. He was felt to be inconveniently committed to the Austrian Slavs, whose cause did not interest the Russian revolutionaries.²

The arrest of Serno-Solovievich must have been a serious blow to the society at the moment of its birth. But the work went forward; and by the autumn of 1862 groups had been formed in most large Russian cities. Reports of what was on foot reached London and spurred the irrepressible Bakunin to fresh efforts. Having shed his illusions about the Slavs of Central Europe, and finding scant satisfaction in the Old Believers and in the "confused Tsarism" of Martyanov, he eagerly opened his arms to *Land and Liberty*. *The Bell* must lend its weight to the

¹ Lemke, *Ocherki*, pp. 350-56.

² *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 77, 83.

new movement. Herzen must send agents to suitable vantage-points to keep up communications with Russia—to the frontier of Russian Poland, to Galatz, to Odessa, to Constantinople. Propaganda must be carried into the Caucasus, into Georgia, up the Volga to Nizhny-Novgorod, and up to the Don. He found a young man named Nicholas Zhukovsky, freshly arrived from Russia, who was burning to embark on this hazardous mission if only Herzen would provide the necessary funds. Bakunin himself undertook to procure for Zhukovsky, through an unnamed Bulgarian (whom he had presumably met in London), a Turkish passport.¹

Herzen regarded the beginnings of *Land and Liberty* with indifference and Bakunin's efforts to further its proceedings with profound mistrust. He had a strong presentiment that it would all end in "a fiasco or a folly". Political propaganda was for Herzen a leisurely affair, whose results showed themselves in years or decades to come. Bakunin was always going off at half-cock. He always thought revolution imminent, and "mistook the third month of pregnancy for the ninth". Ogarev, by way of counselling patience, discovered another and more curious simile. Bakunin, he wrote, had fallen in love with revolution as one might fall in love with a young girl not yet mature. For the humane lover there was nothing for it but to wait—even if waiting meant that he would not live to enjoy her himself. But neither Bakunin nor the young men of *Land and Liberty* were in any mood to wait for their bride. In January 1863, one Sleptsov, a friend of Serno-Solovievich and a member of the executive committee of the society, visited London to invite the editors of *The Bell* to become its "agents" abroad; and the exiles were for the first time faced by the necessity of formally defining their policy in regard to *Land and Liberty*.²

The dilemma of which Herzen had become increasingly conscious during the past twelve months was now unescapable. The attitude of Ogarev made it particularly painful to him. Ogarev, like Bakunin, had a warm heart which made it impossible for him to greet the young revolutionaries with Herzen's chilly scepticism; and Herzen could not strike Bakunin without wounding his friend. From this difficult position he took refuge

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 90-92.

² *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 68, 90; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 89.

as usual in mockery and criticism. He professed to find Sleptsov's manner arrogant and condescending. He asked coldly how many adherents *Land and Liberty* had in Russia. Sleptsov claimed "some hundreds in Petersburg and three thousand in the provinces". When he had gone, Herzen caustically asked Ogarev and Bakunin whether they believed him; and while Ogarev maintained an embarrassed silence, Bakunin replied breezily that, if there were not already so many, there soon would be. Rational objections never deterred him from any course on which he had set his heart.¹

Herzen's native acumen had penetrated both the hollowness of *Land and Liberty*'s pretensions and the hopelessness of its prospects. But his perspicacity did not save him. He was the victim, not merely of the combined enthusiasm of his two allies, but of the force of circumstances. He could not wage war single-handed against both government and revolutionaries. To make his peace with the government was impossible except on terms which would completely stultify his position and his reputation. He had no option but to join hands with the revolutionaries, even at the expense of throwing overboard his objections to secret organisation and conspiratory action. He yielded with bad grace and a heavy heart. He accepted the position of "chief representative abroad of the society *Land and Liberty*"; and on March 1st, 1863, there appeared in *The Bell* an eloquent manifesto announcing the birth of the new organisation and greeting its members as "brothers on the common path". Impelled by Bakunin's vigour, by Ogarev's weakness, and by the logic of events, Herzen had transformed himself against his will from a reformer into a revolutionary and from a publicist into a conspirator.²

But at this stage—about a week before the publication of the manifesto in *The Bell*—Bakunin left London for Sweden, and the fortunes of *Land and Liberty* were merged in the more spectacular issue of the Polish insurrection.

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiv. 440.

² *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvii. 107-8.

CHAPTER 21

POLAND

POLAND played an important rôle in Bakunin's career. The Polish cause had been the occasion of his first display of enthusiasm for national self-determination. In the autumn of 1847 it had inspired his first public speech and led to his expulsion from Paris. In the spring of 1848 it had guided his steps towards Eastern Europe. The Prague Congress had merged the Polish question in the wider issues of Slav brotherhood, and temporarily relegated it to the background of Michael's thought. But Polish associations in Siberia and a Polish marriage (even though his wife cared nothing for Polish aspirations) had helped to keep it alive; and it held its place as one of the items in the triple programme of liberation announced in the manifesto *To my Russian, Polish, and Other Slav Friends*: Russia, the Slavs of Austria, Poland. The question of Russian Poland, the kernel of the Polish problem, had recently entered a new phase. Poland could not be kept in a water-tight compartment or preserved from the infection of those liberal aspirations which spread over Russia in the first years of Alexander II's reign. Polish ambitions revived. The more enlightened of the Tsar's advisers began to toy with the idea of "administrative autonomy" for the oppressed province.

The situation was complicated by the existence of two opposing factions in the Polish camp. Two parallel organisations now sprang up in Warsaw: the Committee of the *Szlachta* or landed gentry, and the Central National Committee. The former hoped for a "liberation" which would leave the landed gentry masters of the new Poland. The National Committee sought freedom not only from the alien Russian yoke, but from the not less galling tyranny of the Polish landowner. This division of aims and interests was accompanied by an equally fundamental divergence of policy. The Polish nobility tended towards co-operation, where such co-operation was possible, with the Russian authorities. The Polish democrats found their

natural allies among the Russian radicals and revolutionaries.

It was inevitable in these circumstances that the Russian Government should seek to play off Polish aristocrats against Polish democrats. But there were peculiar difficulties in the way of this policy. The ancestral estates of many of the leading Polish landowners were acquired in the spacious days when Poland sprawled comfortably across Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and embraced large stretches of Lithuania, White Russia, and the Ukraine, where Polish landowners ruled over an indigenous population of serfs. The "free" Poland of which the Polish *Szlachta* dreamed included these tracts of non-Polish territory. The Poland recognised by Russia as a possible field for the grant of "administrative autonomy" was the so-called "Congress" Poland, whose eastern frontier conformed far too closely to ethnographical limits to suit Polish national aspirations. The territorial appetites of the Polish landowning class made co-operation between the Russian Government and the Committee of the *Szlachta* always precarious. Between the National Committee and the Russian revolutionaries the bond was closer; for both sides subordinated the territorial to the social question, and were prepared to solve the former, at any rate on paper, by a vague reference to the will of the populations concerned. But even among the Polish democrats there were many who did not refuse, when the opportunity offered, to support the most extravagant pretensions of the *Szlachta* to territorial aggrandisement.

The decisive moment in this phase of Polish history occurred, while Bakunin was picking up the threads of his old intrigues in London, in the summer of 1862. In May, Alexander appointed his brother, the Grand-Duke Constantine, who enjoyed a reputation for liberal opinions, Regent of Poland; and a Polish aristocrat of pro-Russian inclinations, the Marquis Wielopolski, was nominated Civil Governor. The intention of these gestures was conciliatory. But the programme of local self-government which accompanied them seemed derisory even to the aristocrats; and it drove the democrats to desperation. A Polish tailor fired at the Grand-Duke, and two printers at Wielopolski. The shots miscarried and the would-be assassins were executed. But the bitterness on both sides was intense, and an open conflict was now certain. Throughout the summer and autumn the

National Committee was busy with preparations for the struggle. Secret emissaries went to and fro between Warsaw and Petersburg, and between Warsaw and the Polish *émigrés* in Western Europe. The temperature in Polish circles everywhere rose to fever heat.

These stirring events reawakened old enthusiasms in Bakunin's heart. The contentious issues which divided Polish patriots were swept aside. As a revolutionary, he could not sympathise with the desire of the aristocracy and the *Szlachta* to maintain a social system akin to serfdom. As a Russian, he could not approve the Polish claim to White Russia and the Ukraine. These were blots which must disappear from the fair page of Polish history. He adjured the Poles to "turn their backs on past history and proclaim a *peasant Poland*". But now that the moment for action had come these considerations seemed merely theoretical. Bakunin enthusiastically welcomed Poles of every complexion who came to talk about the coming insurrection and, without cavilling over their credentials or opinions, introduced them to the chilly and critical Herzen. In June 1862 there arrived from Warsaw a Russian officer named Potebnya, who declared that the Russian garrisons in Poland were seething with disaffection, that they would never fire on Polish insurgents, and that he was organising a committee of Russian officers to make common cause with the Poles when the rebellion should break out. Even Herzen was impressed by Potebnya's evident sincerity and courage, and began to take a slightly less gloomy view of Polish prospects. Then in July came the banquet for Prince Jerome Bonaparte, which gave Bakunin a further opportunity for proclaiming in Polish company his enthusiasm for the Polish cause.¹

In the middle of August, Bakunin went over to Paris. The original purpose and the details of the visit are not recorded. But its most striking episode was a meeting with the Polish general, Mieroslawski. Mieroslawski had fought as a boy in the insurrection of 1831 and taken refuge in Paris. In 1846 he had been one of the leaders of the abortive rising in Prussian Poland, and had thereafter spent two years in a Prussian prison. He was one of those Polish professional soldiers whose military talents were so highly valued by promoters of revolutions. He had

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 81; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xv, 364, 366.

fought in Sicily against the King of Naples; he was one of the military commanders of the Baden insurrection; and he had served in Garibaldi's legions. Now, still under fifty, he was waiting in Paris for the next opportunity for employing his talents and, above all, hoping for the outbreak of revolution in his own country. He was on terms of close friendship with Prince Jerome Bonaparte; and Bakunin's visit to Mieroslawski in Paris may well have been one of the results of the Prince's banquet in London.¹

General Mieroslawski was undeniably a character. Like Bakunin, he combined recklessly radical convictions with the personal prejudices of an aristocrat and a dictator. He conceived revolution not as a popular movement, but as a magnificent adventure planned and directed by himself.

Propaganda is nonsense [he explained on one occasion]. But it's another thing when you see me on my charger, with all these princes, counts, and magnates at my stirrup, and cannon and bayonets behind me—then in the twinkling of an eye, within twenty-four hours, I'll make you an economic revolution. . . . Cannon are wonderfully convincing, and more eloquent talkers than any Demosthenes.

In short, Mieroslawski and Bakunin possessed the same energy, the same megalomania, the same scorn for consistency of thought, and the same capacity for ignoring unwelcome facts. But these temperamental affinities were no guarantee of concord; and on the Polish question there were between them more points of difference than of agreement. For while Mieroslawski professed such advanced opinions that he treated even the National Committee as reactionaries, he yielded to no aristocrat in the vigour of his insistence on the "historical frontiers" of his country, and declared that anyone who even thought of a Poland which did not comprise Lithuania, White Russia, and the Ukraine was his "irreconcilable enemy". Moreover, though he was all in favour of revolution in Russia proper, he considered that, within the frontiers which he claimed as Polish, revolutionary agitation was treason to the national cause.²

Bakunin called on Mieroslawski twice. It may be inferred, from the accounts afterwards written by both, that the conversation passed off amicably, and that Bakunin's enthusiasm

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 173, 179.

² *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xv. 561; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 174, 184.

was proof even against the general's one-sided pretensions. Mieroslawski depicts himself as full of kindly condescension for Bakunin's shortcomings. Though convinced that "the damp of Ladoga had sapped away half the contents of his crazy skull", the general was prepared to admit that "his unhappy brain might gradually recover through constant contact with our sane patriotism". Bakunin solemnly undertook, when the Polish insurrection broke out, to publish a manifesto "commanding" the Russian armies in Poland "to fall back on Smolensk and behind the Dnieper"; and Mieroslawski attached so much importance to this "definite recognition by the editors of *The Bell* of the frontiers of 1772" that he allowed himself to be deterred by his friends from subjecting Bakunin's "innocent gasconades" to "excessive criticism". Bakunin says nothing of this remarkable promise. But he relates how Mieroslawski warned him to have no dealings with other Polish revolutionaries, since "except for himself and his friends there were no serious people among the Poles". In particular, Mieroslawski warned him against the emissaries of the National Committee, the very existence of which he refused to recognise. The measure of credence to be accorded to these accounts (which are complementary, but not contradictory) is a matter of guess-work. All that is certain is that Bakunin borrowed two books from Mieroslawski, introduced to him a Russian officer from Poland who had just arrived in Paris, and returned to London.¹

Bakunin's gregarious nature was unlikely to be impressed by Mieroslawski's exclusive claim to represent the Polish cause. In the latter part of September, three more Poles—Hiller, Padlewski, and Milowicz—arrived in London. They were the bearers of a letter from the Central National Committee in Warsaw to "the editors of *The Bell*", offering "fraternal alliance" between Polish and Russian democrats for the liberation of Poland. Like most Polish visitors to London, they came first to Bakunin, the known and tried friend of Poland; and Bakunin brought them to Herzen. It was a moment of some importance in Polish history; and it was another critical point in Bakunin's relations with the editors of *The Bell*.

Both Bakunin and Herzen were deeply committed by conviction and tradition to the cause of Polish independence. But

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 175-6, 180.

the issue had hitherto been academic. It was now certain that the arbitrament of force was at hand; and the appeal of the National Committee for help presented them for the first time with a practical issue. Bakunin hailed the arrival of the delegates with unalloyed enthusiasm, and made them his protégés. Once action had been decided on, it was time to throw questions and criticisms to the winds, and to open one's heart, one's arms, and (if there was anything in it) one's purse, to the champions of a sacred cause. Herzen took a different view. He regarded Polish prospects with his customary scepticism; and he foresaw that the defeat of this venture would mean the ruin of those who supported it. There was every reason to look this particular gift-horse in the mouth. It was his right and his duty to submit to a rigorous scrutiny the credentials of a movement to which *The Bell* was asked to pledge its name.

Herzen relates how, during the critical interview at Orsett House, Bakunin sat there on tenterhooks, "like the relative of a candidate at an examination, or a lawyer who is afraid that his client will blurt out something and spoil the whole game". Herzen began by reading an appeal to Russian officers in Poland, which he was about to publish in *The Bell*, not to use their arms against their Polish brothers. Milowicz then read the letter from Warsaw. The negotiators, instead of falling into one another's arms, began, coldly and politely, to argue. Herzen behaved, as Bakunin told him afterwards, "like a diplomat at the Congress of Vienna". Both sides were faintly dissatisfied. Herzen thought that the letter, which contained an exposition of Polish policy, had too little to say about the granting of land to the peasants and too much about the lost Polish provinces. If it were amended in such a way as to recognise the right of the peasants to the land and of the inhabitants of Lithuania, White Russia, and the Ukraine to determine their own fate, he would print it in *The Bell* with a suitably sympathetic reply. The Poles countered by proposing certain changes in the text of Herzen's appeal to the Russian officers. The negotiators adjourned till the next day.

Next morning Bakunin came round early to Orsett House to reproach Herzen with his lack of warmth and confidence. Mindful perhaps of his encounter with Mieroslawski, he begged Herzen not to "insult an excited national feeling". Instead of behaving like a "practical man", Herzen, he declared, was

cavilling over phrases as if the matter in hand were mere journalism or "literature". But Bakunin also applied his powers of persuasion to the Poles; and they arrived for the next interview prepared to concede everything that Herzen wanted. The result was indeed somewhat incongruous. For while the letter, in its final form, continued to declare that "there is for us only one Poland, which consists of a union of Poland, Lithuania, and the Ruthenes", it recognised for the inhabitants "full liberty to remain in alliance with Poland or to dispose of themselves according to their own will". Herzen left to Polish consciences the difficulty of reconciling these diverse pronouncements. He printed the letter in *The Bell* of October 1st, 1862, and the reply in the following issue. Bakunin's request that his signature might appear with those of Herzen and Ogarev beneath the reply was rejected.¹

In the meantime Bakunin had not forgotten Mieroslawski. The latter, too, had written offering to conclude "serious binding agreements" with the "triumvirate", but once more warning Bakunin against association with "all sorts and conditions of people". Michael replied on October 2nd, the day after the publication in *The Bell* of the National Committee's letter. He tried to gild the pill by hailing Mieroslawski as the "most energetic and cultivated of men". He explained that it was impossible to break off relations with the National Committee. But he hoped that this need not disturb relations between the "Londoners" and Mieroslawski.

This mild appeal was answered by Mieroslawski with a shout of rage. If the National Committee had ever existed, he wrote back, it had now committed suicide by its letter to *The Bell*; and he sent to several French newspapers a letter in which he denounced this "alleged committee" for having "offered two-thirds of Polish territory to a revived Muscovy". Bakunin had no mind to let the controversy rest there. In the spring of 1863, when the Polish insurrection had already begun, he issued a brochure containing excerpts from this correspondence, and maliciously expressed the hope that the general would reach Poland "in good time" to see the Russians engaged in the struggle for Polish liberty. Mieroslawski prudently remained in Paris to publish a counter-attack on Bakunin, in which he once

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiv. 436-9; xv. 503-5, 508-10.

more "demanded the Poland of 1772". Nor was this the end. Five years later, this indefatigable warrior returned yet again to the charge. He published in Paris an open letter in which he denounced Bakunin's share in the now half-forgotten insurrection; and this provoked a reply from Bakunin in Geneva under the appropriate title *A Last Word on M. Mieroslawski*. By this time it may be doubted whether anyone took the faintest interest in this ancient quarrel, except the two implacable combatants themselves and Alexander Herzen, who wrote a long and gloomy article of self-exculpation in *The Bell*.¹

In the winter of 1862-3, while the air was thunderous with the impending Polish storm, Bakunin had another curious adventure, which once more illustrates his easy-going gullibility and optimism. About the middle of December he received a letter from Paris, signed "Abracadabra", congratulating him on his efforts in the Polish cause and warning him in particular against the intrigues of Mieroslawski. Bakunin, flattered by this attention, replied expressing eagerness to become more closely acquainted and begging the unknown writer to disclose his name. The mysterious correspondent refused to unmask his identity, but described himself as a Pole born in Russia, formerly, like Bakunin, a political exile in Siberia, and now a refugee in Paris, which he liked for "its mild climate, its democratic and social clubs, its abundance of news, and the inconstancy of its women". He declared that "his position and connexions did not allow him to find out much". But he harped on his distrust of Mieroslawski as a guarantee of his good faith; and he hinted that he would be grateful for any information which Bakunin could give him about Polish affairs. The correspondence continued in terms of increasing intimacy for more than two months. If "Abracadabra" failed to obtain any important information, it was not for lack of good-will on Bakunin's part, but because Bakunin knew no more than what was already public property about the growing unrest in Poland. It is not known what finally brought the correspondence to an end. Bakunin never guessed that "Abracadabra" was an agent of the Russian secret police.²

The Polish insurrection had been so long planned, advertised,

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 181-6; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xx. 231-9.

² *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xv. 595-604; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 108.

and disputed over in prospect that its outbreak came at last with all the shock of a complete surprise. It was the Russian authorities who, rightly suspecting that nobody was so well prepared for the event as themselves, decided to forestall the rebels and to force the issue. Conscription for the Russian army had not hitherto been applied in Poland. On January 15th, 1863, a selective levy was ordered. It was to be confined, in the first instance, to the urban proletariat—the class of malcontents from which the insurgents might hope to draw their support; and the recruiting officers went at once to work. This move forced the hand of the National Committee. After a week of hasty preparation, the revolt began on the night of January 22nd–23rd with a general attack on the Russian garrisons in Poland.

The high hopes which Bakunin, and for a short time even Herzen, had placed in Russian-Polish co-operation were dashed to the ground. The suddenness of the outbreak took unawares not only the exiles in London, but the leaders of *Land and Liberty* in Petersburg, who had urged the National Committee to defer the insurrection till May, and the sympathetic Russian officers in Poland, who found themselves attacked and disarmed without warning by those whom they had been prepared to regard as comrades. Not a Russian officer or soldier went over to the insurgents, and in Russia itself all remained quiet. It seemed inconceivable that the Poles could succeed single-handed. But guerilla fighting began all over the country; and tense excitement gripped radical Europe. There had been nothing like it for fifteen years—since the failures of 1848 and 1849. “This much is certain,” Marx wrote eagerly to Engels, “that the Era of Revolution is now once more fairly opened.”¹

These events made it impossible for Bakunin to remain in England. He had always declared that whenever the insurrection began, and whatever its prospects of success, he would be there. He was not one of those who could exhort others to fight for freedom and not fight for it himself. “*Propaganda oblige—il faut payer de sa personne*”, as he had written to his brother Alexander in November. It was well enough for Herzen, the man of letters, to sit quietly at home, celebrating in *The Bell* the initial successes of the insurgents, denouncing the brutalities of

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 199; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiii. 134.

the Russian authorities, appealing to the Russian troops not to fire on their Polish brothers, and expressing in private the gloomy conviction that things would come to a bad end. Bakunin, the man of action, the stormy petrel of revolution, must be on the spot. Poland was ablaze, and he must help to fan and spread the flames.

To reach Poland turned out to be a more complicated matter than he had expected. The material difficulties were easily surmounted. He obtained—by what means is unknown—a convenient passport in the name of Henri Soulié, a French Canadian professor; and Count Branicki, a rich Pole, whose acquaintance he had made in Paris, was ready to defray the expenses of his journey. These points settled, Bakunin had no doubt that he would be received by the Poles with open arms. He wrote "letter after letter" to the National Committee in Warsaw volunteering his services. He would create a diversion by agitation against the government in Russia itself. He would stir up peasant revolts in Lithuania and the Ukraine. He would recruit a Russian legion of deserters from the Russian army to fight on the side of the rebels. He and his friends would "throw themselves between the Polish insurgents and the Russian troops in order to prevent, if it is not too late, the consummation of your misfortune and our disgrace".

But Bakunin was rapidly driven to the galling and disconcerting conclusion that he was not wanted. Polish mistrust of all Russians was deep-seated; and there were ample grounds for doubting Bakunin's discretion. His offers of service were received without enthusiasm. His first letters remained unanswered. Then a message came from the National Committee that he had better remain in London. But Bakunin was not so easily rebuffed. After a brief moment of hesitation, he set sail from London on February 21st, 1863. He left with Cwierzakiewicz, the London representative of the National Committee, one of his famous codes for future communications, and received in return a recipe for sympathetic ink. As a parting shot, he requested that a responsible representative of the Committee (not "a fool or a half-fool", as he tartly added) should meet him in Copenhagen to discuss the further course of his journey. Herzen, for once humouring Bakunin's customary taste for mystification, wrote to his daughter in Italy that "Uncle Michael has left

for Brussels and may, perhaps, get as far as Florence".¹

It would be a mistake to conceive of Bakunin as deliberately setting out to redeem his honour by sacrificing himself to a forlorn hope. When he left London the rebellion was not yet irretrievably doomed. A few days before, even the cautious Herzen had written to Ogarev that "the Polish cause is holding its own in spite of all, and is, if anything, on the up grade". There was widespread expectation of diplomatic, or even military, intervention by France and Great Britain in favour of Poland; and as late as April, Herzen's more impetuous son still thought "the fall of the Holstein-Gottorp² dynasty inevitable". In February 1863 Bakunin was entitled to regard the Polish insurrection as a going concern whose chances would be enhanced by his prestige, if not by his counsels. Moreover, he had another string to his bow. If he was prevented from reaching Poland, he would establish himself in Stockholm and "incite those ambitious Swedish patriots to start a rising in Finland", which would prove highly embarrassing to the Russian Government in the midst of the Polish crisis. Having reached Copenhagen, he waited four or five days in vain for a summons from the National Committee; and in the beginning of March he went on to Sweden.³

On the ship which bore him from Copenhagen to Gothenburg he fell into conversation, in his expansive way, with the Brazilian Chargé d'Affaires in the Scandinavian capitals, one Senhor Britto, and travelled with him as far as Stockholm. In the course of the journey, it became difficult and tedious to maintain the personality of the Canadian Henri Soulié. Bakunin revealed his identity and pledged Senhor Britto to secrecy. He spoke of his projects, and assured his companion that only a peasant rising was needed to overthrow the Russian Government. Senhor Britto thought his fellow-traveller charming, but did not take his ideas very seriously. The Brazilian diplomat did not guess

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 201, 205; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 103, 375-7, 491; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, 99-101, 107-9; *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 113.

² The nineteenth-century Tsars were Romanovs only through the female line; the husband of Catherine the Great, the putative father of the Tsar Paul, was a Duke of Holstein-Gottorp. Much to the annoyance of the Russian Court, the *Almanach de Gotha* always described the reigning dynasty as the "House of Holstein-Gottorp-Romanov".

³ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 68, 103-4, 225; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 110.

what interest would have been aroused in his Russian colleague by the name of Bakunin.¹

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Scarcely had Bakunin left London when an opportunity occurred which he would have embraced with open arms. Branicki, the wealthy Pole who had provided funds for his journey, now played the principal part in recruiting and financing a Polish legion in Paris to reinforce the insurgents. The legion, composed of Poles, Frenchmen, Hungarians, a solitary Russian, and a sprinkling of other nationalities, more than two hundred strong, was to travel by sea to the Baltic and make a descent on the Lithuanian coast. The commander of the legion was a Colonel Lapinski, a Polish freebooter who had fought against the Russians in the Caucasus. His second in command was a Jew named Stephen Polès, *alias* Tugendhold; and one Demontowicz accompanied the expedition as a "civil commissioner" representing the "provisional government" which had been set up in Warsaw. On February 14th, 1863, just a week before Bakunin's departure, the legion transported itself with the utmost secrecy from Paris to London to await embarkation. But five more weeks of waiting and preparation were fatal to the secrecy of the expedition. By the time the steamer *Ward Jackson*, which had been chartered to convey the legionaries to the Baltic, was ready to sail, the Russian Ambassador had learned of the affair and protested to the Foreign Office; and the customs authorities discovered that the cargo, euphemistically described in the manifest as "hardware", consisted of arms and ammunition. The case was still under consideration when, on the night of March 21st, the legionaries embarked on the *Ward Jackson* and, fearing that all would be lost by further delay, persuaded the captain, Robert Weatherley, to put to sea without waiting for clearance papers.

Bakunin had sailed for Copenhagen without learning of this bold project. The organisers of the expedition either forgot him or—more probably—mistrusted his discretion. But now that the advantages of secrecy had anyhow been lost, the prestige of Bakunin's presence became a paramount consideration; and on the day when the *Ward Jackson* sailed, both Herzen and

¹ *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 112, 119.

Cwierczakiewicz telegraphed to Stockholm inviting him to join her at Helsingborg, her first port of call. Bakunin afterwards complained bitterly to Herzen that he, a man of nearly fifty, had been kept in the dark like a child, and curtly ordered hither and thither at the last moment like an errand-boy. But his first reaction was one of joy at the opportunity for at last playing some active rôle. He received the telegrams on the afternoon of Sunday, March 22nd. By eight o'clock next morning he was not only ready to start himself, but had induced a Pole named Kalinka, whom he had met in Stockholm, to come with him. There was no railway beyond Gothenburg, and the rest of the journey had to be made by coach. The travellers did not reach Helsingborg till the evening of March 26th. By that time the *Ward Jackson* had already been in port twenty-four hours waiting for them, and Captain Weatherley, together with the principal officers of the expedition, had ensconced themselves comfortably in the local hotel.¹

The arrival of the travellers produced an atmosphere of mutual irritation. The Poles were not at all pleased to see the uninvited guest whom Bakunin brought with him; for Kalinka belonged to the aristocratic and clerical faction, and was a close adherent of Czartoryski. Bakunin, for his part, was disappointed in the Poles. Lapinski was brave and intelligent; but Bakunin soon came to the conclusion that he had "no conscience or at any rate an elastic one", and that he hated all Russians. Polès-Tugendhold was a Jew, and therefore a spy. The one Russian in the party, a harmless person named Reinhard, was nicknamed "the Muscovite" and regarded with evident suspicion by his comrades. But all this was nothing to the equivocal behaviour of Captain Weatherley, whose conversation constantly turned on the £500 fine to which he had rendered himself liable by sailing without papers, and on the dangers of Siberia and the gallows. When the party was once more ready to put to sea, the captain alleged that the weather was too bad, and detained them in Helsingborg for another day and a half. Bakunin had no doubt that the Englishman was in the pay of the Russian Government. He longed for the time when they would sail out into the Baltic,

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 111-16, 119; unpublished Foreign Office papers in the Record Office relating to the *Ward Jackson* (extracts published by the writer in *The Romantic Exiles*, 1933, Appendix E).

and he would be able to reduce Captain Weatherley to order by holding a revolver at his head.¹

In the meanwhile, disagreeable news had reached Helsingborg—news which appears to have had some bearing on the hesitations of the gallant captain. The spring of 1863 was unusually early in the North; and the naval port of Reval being already ice-free, Russian cruisers might be expected at any time down the Baltic. Bakunin was never at a loss for an expedient. He wrote to Branicki in Paris begging him to purchase an armoured cruiser “with four guns of the highest calibre” to show the Polish flag in the Baltic. With odd precision, he estimated the cost at 1,800,000 francs, and concluded (if we may believe Polès-Tugendhold’s highly picturesque account) with the magnificent appeal: “I am giving my life—give your millions!” Branicki did not respond to this invitation. But it gave the legionaries a taste of the quality of their new recruit. Spirits revived; and at one o’clock in the afternoon of March 28th, 1863, the *Ward Jackson* at last set sail from Helsingborg. A separate boat was required to bring Bakunin and his belongings on board. Spectators wondered whether a warrior had ever before set out for battle with eight pieces of baggage.²

The ostensible destination of the *Ward Jackson* was the island of Gothland, off the Swedish shore of the Baltic; and from there a direct crossing would be made to the Lithuanian coast. But Captain Weatherley had other ideas. He had certainly heard of the approach of the Russian cruisers. He may have heard Bakunin’s threat of the revolver. Alone with a handful of English seamen amidst this gang of hot-headed foreign desperadoes in a cruiser-infested sea, he preferred guile to open resistance. There had been complaints of the quality of the drinking-water, which was chalky and of the colour of milk. Captain Weatherley declared that he would call at Copenhagen for a fresh supply. The operation would not take more than two hours. Having brought the ship safely in, he went straight ashore and paid a visit to Sir Augustus Paget, the British Minister.

The nature of the interview is not recorded. But Captain Weatherley did not return to the *Ward Jackson* that night, and announced next day that he would not sail in her again so long

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 112-13, 116-19.

² *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 130, 132, 134.

as there was a single Pole on board. Thereupon the rest of the crew also deserted, leaving on board only the legionaries, the chief engineer, and a Danish pilot. Bakunin himself, accompanied by one of Lapinski's officers, hurried to the British Legation. Sir Augustus Paget received them with complete cordiality. He agreed that they had been badly treated. But he thought that they underestimated the disagreeable consequences of meeting Russian cruisers, and he refused to believe that Captain Weatherley was in Russian pay. In any case he could not compel the captain and the crew to sail. He could only refer his visitors to the local agents of the *Ward Jackson's* owners; and he remarked that, by a curious coincidence, these same agents were suppliers to the Russian fleet, and were at that moment preparing to coal a Russian cruiser which was expected in the port. Bakunin was charmed with the interview, and thought Sir Augustus "a perfect gentleman". The agents were obliging, and offered to find a Danish crew to take the *Ward Jackson* to Malmö, the nearest Swedish port, only two hours distant. There the legionaries would once more have to shift for themselves.¹

The offer was perforce accepted; and on March 30th, nine days after the glorious departure from the Thames, the expedition came to rest at Malmö. The local population was not insensible to the occasion. It greeted the legionaries with cries of "Vive la Pologne!" and thronged the courtyard of the hotel where the leaders had found quarters, cheering and singing patriotic songs. Presently Bakunin appeared. It is odd that a Russian should have been chosen by a company of Poles to return thanks on behalf of Poland. But few people in hot blood—it was different when there was time for reflexion—ever contested Bakunin's innate claim to leadership. There was also the practical advantage that his voice would carry above the shouts of the mob. He thanked his audience for their enthusiastic reception of the travellers, and declared that Poles and Swedes had "always nourished the same love for freedom and a profound mutual sympathy". There were renewed cheers for Sweden and Poland and more singing of patriotic songs; and the evening ended with a banquet at the hotel.²

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 113-14; *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 134-7.

² *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 114, 137-8.

But these manifestations could not mask the ignominious character of the fate which had overtaken the expedition. On April 1st, 1863, Bakunin and Demontowicz went to Stockholm, and Lapinski and the other Poles followed a fortnight later. The rank and file of the legionaries waited at Malmø in the expectation of finding another ship to take them to Poland. But the ridiculous end of the cruise of the *Ward Jackson* gave little encouragement to further maritime effort; and the leaders took refuge in the more rewarding pursuits of self-defence and mutual recrimination. There was a general inclination in Stockholm to put the blame on the absent Cwierczakiewicz, whose faulty arrangements had delayed the legionaries and ruined the secrecy of the expedition. Cwierczakiewicz, in his turn, alleged that the real culprit was Bakunin, who had introduced the unwelcome Kalinka and had offered "unsuitable and pernicious advice" without being asked. Bakunin himself was now ready enough to abuse Kalinka, who turned out to be a "pupil of the Jesuits" and "more of a Jesuit than a Pole". But he induced Demontowicz and Lapinski to sign a certificate attesting that the arrival of Kalinka had had "no influence on the success or non-success of the expedition"; that the advice tendered by himself had been neither unsolicited nor harmful; and finally, that the blame for the failure rested on the preliminary delays in London and on the "unfortunate choice" of Captain Weatherley, who "deliberately betrayed" the expedition. Herzen, to whom this precious document was forwarded, pronounced Cwierczakiewicz "a swine" and Bakunin "a weakling", referred to "this sewer of intrigues", and washed his hands of the whole business. Demontowicz finally rounded on Bakunin and declared that he was a man who "spoiled everything he undertook", and had "done nothing but harm to Poland". There the matter rested. Demontowicz, Lapinski, and Polès-Tugendhold have all left accounts of the affair whose competitive unreliability fails to obscure the stark outlines of this egregious fiasco.¹

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The episode of the *Ward Jackson*, trivial in itself and without influence on the course of history, was typical of the Polish

¹ *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 123, 140; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 119-120; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 226, 229-30, 234; *Steklov, M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 225.

insurrection of 1863. It was elaborately planned, and much thought and devotion were expended in its preparation. But it required for its success an almost inconceivable combination of favourable chances; and it was mismanaged from the outset. The first set-back brought to light deep-seated jealousies and antipathies between Poles and Russians and between Poles of the different factions. The ignominious disembarkation at Malmö was not quite the end. Early in June, Lapinski collected the rump of his legion, procured a ship, and actually reached the East Prussian coast near Memel. But one of the boats in which the landing was attempted sank with a large loss of life, and the survivors returned disconsolately to Sweden to be disbanded. By this time the insurrection itself was almost stamped out. Organised reprisals were soon under way. Poland was pacified for another forty years.

The episode had its influence on the later stages of Bakunin's career. In Paris, sixteen years before, he had been fired with a belief in Polish nationalism as a revolutionary force. The fiasco of 1863 destroyed for ever this persistent illusion. Bakunin could no longer be blind to the fact that Polish nationalism contained a strong admixture of territorial greed, and that the desire for Polish national freedom was compatible with the desire to impose Polish rule on other national units. He perceived at length that the vast majority of Poles were not revolutionaries at all, and were interested in the cause of revolution in Russia only in so far as they could use it as an instrument of their own policy. The natural antipathy between Pole and Russian, against which he had struggled so long, reasserted itself. Bakunin discovered that there were "few, too few, Poles with whom we can work whole-heartedly", and that "every Pole hates, more or less, not only the Russian Government, but the Russian people". The Polish illusion had gone the way of the illusion of the Austrian Slavs; and the will-o'-the-wisp of Slav nationalism was relegated to the background of his political ambitions. The Austrian authorities were, however, not reassured. A few days after the collapse of the ill-fated expedition, a notification reached all Austrian frontier posts warning them that "the well-known Russian agitator Bakunin" had gone "at the end of last, or the beginning of the present, year" to Poland, and that, in the event of his appearance on any Austrian frontier, he was to

be at once arrested and sent to Prague.¹

In the meanwhile, just about the time when Bakunin with his eight pieces of baggage was going aboard the *Ward Jackson*, a young woman of attractive appearance called and enquired for him at Orsett House. The cautious Herzen thought of spies, and was persuaded with some difficulty that the visitor was really Antonia Bakunin. The whole situation irritated him. It was absurd that Bakunin should have married; and it was still more absurd that a helpless young woman whom he had no means of supporting should be pursuing him round the world. Once convinced of Antonia's identity, Herzen found lodgings for her. But he received her without cordiality; and he did not think it worth while to telegraph to Bakunin the news of her arrival. Bakunin, who rarely bore malice on his own account, remembered with bitterness to the end of his life the cold comfort which his wife had received from Herzen on her arrival in London from her arduous journey.

It was only after disembarking from the *Ward Jackson* in Malmø that Bakunin learned that Antonia was in London. At first he was inclined to fall in with Herzen's evident assumption that she would remain there for the present; and he began a letter commending her to the kindness of Natalie Ogarev. Then—since his own plans were so nebulous—it seemed intolerable to prolong the separation. He telegraphed to Herzen urgently demanding that Antonia should be sent on to him in Stockholm. On second thoughts, Herzen himself may have preferred that alternative. Antonia started at once. She reached Stockholm about April 8th; and on the next day Bakunin wrote to Herzen that he was "completely happy". It was just a year and nine months since he had left her in Irkutsk.²

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 124; unpublished circular in the Archives of the Ministry of the Interior, Prague.

² Tuchkova-Ogareva, *Vospominaniya*, pp. 323-4; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 118, 122; Bauler, *Byloe* (July 1907), p. 77; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 204-6.

CHAPTER 22

SWEDISH EPISODE

THE false name under which Bakunin had arrived in Sweden served more effectively to enhance his importance than to mask his identity. He had come at a propitious moment. The Swedes were too mindful of the dangers of proximity to regard the Russian question with the same indifference as the phlegmatic and self-satisfied English. The Polish insurrection had made an enormous impression, and quickly became an issue in Swedish domestic politics. The cautious conservative government of the day was keenly alive to the importance of maintaining correct, if not cordial, relations with its powerful neighbour. The enthusiastic radicals, on the other hand, openly applauded the Polish insurgents and looked hopefully for the downfall of the Tsar, the traditional enemy of Sweden and of liberty. Bakunin's fame as the martyr of Russian despotism and the hero of a miraculous escape from Russian bondage made him an important asset to the Swedish radical party; and one of its leaders, Blanche, who was distinguished from most of his colleagues by being able to speak some French, took the new-comer under his wing. It was, no doubt, disconcerting when Bakunin asked to be introduced to the Swedish revolutionary committee, and was told that no such body existed, since nobody in Sweden wanted revolution. But these mild discrepancies did not diminish the mutual enthusiasm inspired by the alliance. In London Bakunin had felt himself completely ignored. In Stockholm he was a personage.¹

From Sweden, too, he could look eastwards across the frontier. In Finland, the border country wrested by Russia from Sweden in 1809, the breath of coming change was also in the air. Here as elsewhere, Alexander II had been toying ever since his accession with concessions to the liberals. Bakunin failed to perceive that the Finnish *bourgeoisie*, which was predominantly of Swedish stock, was far more interested in the return of the constitution, which Alexander dangled before its eyes, than in social

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 224; *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 122.

revolution or in the overthrow of the Tsar; and he saw in Finland another Poland—the natural enemy of Russia. In this illusion he received encouragement from an unexpected quarter. A Finnish poet, Emil von Quanten, had migrated some years previously, no doubt as the result of his political opinions, from Finland to Sweden; and there he published a book advocating the liberation of Finland from Russia, and the establishment of a personal union between Sweden and Finland, the King of Sweden assuming the title of Grand-Duke of Finland. King Charles XV was flattered by this ambitious programme. Unlike his constitutional advisers, he nourished a whole-hearted hatred of Russia, and was always ready to encourage her enemies. Emil von Quanten became his chief private secretary.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the Polish leaders of 1863 should have approached so influential an enemy of the Russian Government as Quanten; and it was probably his Polish friends who introduced Bakunin to him. Through him, Bakunin achieved a singular honour. He was received in private audience by Charles XV. What passed at the audience is not recorded. It was perhaps natural that the King, having indulged the whim of a personal meeting with the world-famous revolutionary, should prefer to keep it a secret. It is more surprising that Bakunin should, on this occasion, have observed a discretion otherwise so foreign to his character. He may indeed have been conscious of a certain incompatibility between strict revolutionary principles and this concession to royal dignity; and he showed none of his customary eagerness to boast of the exploit to his friends. He himself, in later years, expressed himself in caustic terms on Garibaldi's predilection for monarchs.¹

Count Dashkov, the Russian Minister at the Swedish Court, seems to have been poorly served by his intelligence service; for it was only after the cruise of the *Ward Jackson* and the return of the voyage from Malmø, that he discovered, through a casual indiscretion of his Brazilian colleague, the real identity of the Canadian professor Henri Soulié. Count Manderstrøm, the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, apprised by Dashkov of this discovery, obligingly undertook "to give orders to watch this most dangerous person" and "to do everything that he could to rid the country of so hardened a revolutionary". Sweden was,

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 222, 224.

however, he explained, democratically governed; and Swedish democracy unfortunately was prejudiced against Russia. At their next interview Manderstrøm, having made enquiries, told the Russian Minister that the state of public opinion, "particularly at a moment when it was so much exercised over Polish affairs", would not permit of the expulsion of Bakunin from Sweden. He added, by way of consolation, that he was looking up old telegrams and newspaper reports of 1848 with a view to enlightening the public about Bakunin's past. Early in May an article appeared in the *Posttidningen* reviewing Bakunin's past career in unflattering terms. Its actual authorship was a matter of speculation (it was, in fact, the work of the Prime Minister, Baron de Geer). But official inspiration was easily detected, and a storm broke out in the radical press. Bakunin himself replied with a series of three articles in the radical *Aftonbladet*; and the controversy which raged round his person raised his popularity to its highest point.¹

The idea of a hostile press campaign against Bakunin, so rashly launched by Count Manderstrøm, found an enthusiastic, though belated, echo in Petersburg. In dealing with a country where public opinion exercised so deplorable an influence on the conduct of public affairs, the most hopeful course was obviously to discredit Bakunin in the eyes of his supporters. In the friendly columns of the *Aftonbladet* Bakunin had somewhat rashly declared that "there was not a single fact in his past life for which he need blush". The authorities in Petersburg thought it would be useful to put together for publicity purposes "a short sketch of Bakunin's criminal actions", including in it appropriate extracts from the criminal's own *Confession*. It was to bear the title *Michael Bakunin depicted by Himself*; its authorship was to be attributed to "a Swede", who had mysteriously obtained access to the Russian archives; and it was to be published in Stockholm. The *Confession*, twelve years after it had been written, might indeed have brought a few blushes to the cheek even of a "hardened revolutionary". But the Russian authorities appear to have come to the conclusion that it reflected no great credit on themselves to have been so easily bamboozled; and after a first draft had been submitted to the Tsar for ap-

¹ *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 116, 119-22, 124-5; Louis de Geer, *Minnen*, i. 243-4; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 256.

proval on June 12th, 1863, the whole project was—for this or some other reason—abandoned. The *Confession* rested in the secret archives for nearly sixty years longer, and Bakunin was never faced with the necessity of explaining away this nightmare of his prison life.¹

In the meantime, while Bakunin was basking in the blaze of publicity kindled by Baron de Geer's article, young Sasha Herzen arrived in Stockholm from London. The young man's susceptibility to female attraction provided his father with excellent reasons for wishing him out of England; and it had long been Herzen's ambition to launch his son on a political career. But if the initiative came from Herzen, Bakunin eagerly welcomed it, and had, for some weeks now, been impatiently expecting Sasha's arrival. Bakunin always loved company. Besides, to have a son of Herzen as one of his henchmen would both flatter his self-esteem and strengthen his position with the radical, but not at all revolutionary, Swedes.²

The first event of Sasha's stay in Stockholm was a public banquet in Bakunin's honour organised by the Swedish radicals. On the evening of May 28th, 1863, a hundred and forty persons assembled at the Phoenix Hotel "to manifest the sympathy of Sweden in the sufferings which he had undergone for devotion to his fatherland". In a correct but miscellaneous company, consisting of politicians, business men, ministers of religion, officers, officials, and even three or four members of the nobility, Bakunin distinguished himself by his zeal as a trencherman and the singularity of his costume. He appeared in what was conveniently described as "the dress of the people", though his defiance of sartorial convention was probably attributable to his now habitual carelessness rather than to any political symbolism. Nothing occurred to mar the general enthusiasm. The oratorical part of the proceedings began—it was said, at Bakunin's express request—with the loyal toast of the King. Then Blanche proposed the toast of "young Russia", with which he coupled the name of the principal guest. He heavily attacked the Russian autocracy, and hailed Bakunin as the "apostle of light and liberty". The speech culminated with the reading

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 256-62.

² *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 263; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 122.

of verses composed for the occasion.

Bakunin replied in French; and those of his hearers who did not understand that language had to wait for the translation which appeared in next day's *Aftonbladet*. But the words mattered little. The use of a foreign tongue impaired neither the enthusiasm of the audience nor the inspiration of the orator. Bakunin thanked Sweden for her "noble hospitality". No other country, "except perhaps Great Britain", granted asylum so freely and so generously to the victims of political persecution. But let nobody suppose that the "Government of Petersburg" had the support and sympathy of the Russian people. It was the Russian Government who were the real revolutionaries. It was the Russian Government who, in Lithuania and the Ukraine, were letting loose a peasant *jacquerie* against the Polish landowners, and did not scruple "to appeal to terrible underground forces and excite popular passions at the risk of involving all Europe in fire and blood". (It was an odd accusation in the mouth of Michael Bakunin; but his cue was to play on the fears and prejudices of his unrepentantly *bourgeois* audience.) Far from being a revolutionary, Bakunin declared that he and his friends were not even unconditional republicans. "The terms 'monarchy' and 'republic' do not matter, provided the whole edifice has no other basis but the real liberty of the people." *Land and Liberty*, which he had the honour to represent, was "a vast association at once patriotic, conservative, liberal, and democratic". It counted among its members "all classes of Russian society, all Russians of good-will, whatever their rank or position: generals and officers *en masse*, major and minor officials, aristocratic landowners, merchants, priests and sons of priests, peasants, and millions of the dissenting sects". This society already formed a sort of state within a state. It was organising its own finances, its own administration, its own police, and soon—the orator hoped—it would have its own army. It had concluded "a formal alliance with the Central Committee in Warsaw which is to-day the national government of Poland". In the name of this society and of the new Russia, Michael held out a hand to "Swedish patriots", and drank to the coming prosperity of the "grand federal Scandinavian union".

This remarkable speech, which not only identified *Land and Liberty* with the cause of constitutional monarchy, but bestowed

on that tiny group of hot-headed students millions of members from all ranks of Russian society, was the feature of the evening. Bakunin was followed by Sasha Herzen, who spoke of the work of his father and Ogarev and the Russian press in London, and hailed the future union between Slav and Scandinavian federations. Finally, an obscure individual named Felix, the only Pole who had been found willing to grace the banquet in honour of Michael Bakunin, replied to the toast of Poland, and drank to the Russian officers, fit but few, who had sacrificed themselves for the Polish cause.¹

This memorable occasion had an important sequel. The precise circumstances of the quarrel which broke out between Bakunin and the son of his old friend remain obscure; for a monster letter to Herzen in which Bakunin detailed his grievances is still unpublished. But vanity was the determining cause on both sides. Bakunin considered that his age and prestige gave him undeniable credentials to leadership, and that an inexperienced young man of twenty-four was naturally destined for a subaltern rôle. Sasha suffered from a combination of conceit, indiscretion, and tactlessness, which even youth cannot excuse. Herzen and *The Bell* represented *Land and Liberty* in London; and Sasha seems to have considered that the dynastic principle applied to its representation elsewhere. He hastily assumed that the glory which Bakunin enjoyed in Stockholm, and which culminated in the banquet of May 28th, was a tribute not to a personality but to a cause; and he coveted these laurels for his own brow.

The dispute whether Bakunin or Sasha Herzen was the authorised representative in Stockholm of *Land and Liberty* was, as Herzen afterwards remarked, comic in the highest degree. It was a dispute not about realities but about a name; and the vanity of Sasha, who had no other title to distinction, was perhaps less ridiculous than that of Bakunin, who needed no credentials save his own achievements and sufferings. But once Sasha had staked out his claim and found it contested, his behaviour became inexcusable. The gossip of Orsett House had given him a precocious insight into Bakunin's shortcomings. He knew well enough what his father thought and said in private

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 134-8; *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 124-5; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 225.

about his supposed ally; and he now turned his knowledge to good account. He abused Bakunin to his friends. He abused him to his face. Bakunin retaliated in kind by calling Sasha a thief; and Swedish radicals listened, till they were tired, to the mutual vilifications of the two Russian leaders. Fortunately Sasha took a dislike to Stockholm and complained of the cold; and the scandal was terminated by his return to London towards the end of June.¹

The banquet in the Phoenix Hotel was the high-water mark of Bakunin's popularity in Stockholm. The quarrel with Sasha Herzen was the first symptom of its decline. There was no longer any motive for Bakunin's continued sojourn in the Swedish capital. The Polish cause was dead and the Poles estranged. The Finns had been seduced by Alexander II, who issued a proclamation convoking the Finnish Diet, for the first time since 1809, for September 15th; and Bakunin had a personal quarrel (of which, he declared, Sasha Herzen was the cause) with Quanten. *Land and Liberty* was moribund. Sleptsov, the emissary who had come to London at the beginning of the year, failed to return to Petersburg, had a nervous breakdown, and retired to Switzerland. In May 1863 Nicholas Utin, another member of the executive committee, took fright and fled from Russia. The whole society was in a state of dissolution. Its representatives did not even answer Bakunin's letters, and were apparently not impressed when he assured them that he had already smuggled seven thousand copies of various proclamations into the Archangel province through an intermediary in Finland. He found an "honest, capable, and business-like young man" named Straube who would undertake the sale of Herzen's publications in Russia if somebody would provide him with a credit of 4000 or 5000 francs. But Herzen remained indifferent. The most radical of the Swedes turned a deaf ear to hints of revolution in Sweden. Presently, the usual financial clouds began to roll up. Bakunin's Swedish friends became too well acquainted with his methods of indiscriminate borrowing and of taking advances from editors for articles which he failed to write; and they began to resent his practical application of the theory of common property. His presence in Stockholm became irksome as well as

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 268, 282, 491-3, 539.

useless. Already in July, he made up his mind to move on before the winter set in.¹

He assumed at first that he would return as a matter of course to London. But the prospect seemed on reflexion less and less enticing. There was nothing in the English climate or in English life to reconcile a young wife to separation from everything she had hitherto known and loved. Even to him England offered little—except that polite toleration which, when closely inspected, seemed scarcely distinguishable from indifference; and the deterioration of his relations with Herzen removed the one attraction which had brought him to London eighteen months before. An alternative was, however, hard to find. Austria and the other German states were closed to him. The France of Napoleon III was capricious and unreliable. Switzerland had not yet become a favourite rallying-point for the political exiles of half Europe. There was not much choice left. In London, Bakunin had already found the Italians the most active and determined enemies of his old bugbear, the Austrian Empire, and therefore the natural allies of the Slavs. He had met Mazzini and corresponded with Garibaldi. In Italy there was at least the germ of a revolutionary movement—a movement which had neither been stifled nor gone stale. But these political inducements to settle in Italy were perhaps secondary. Italy was a warm, friendly, unforbidding country where necessities of life were cheap, and where he and Antonia might enjoy an interlude of peace and comfort. It was the first occasion on which a desire, however transient, for retirement and repose manifested itself in Bakunin's life. He decided to settle awhile in Italy and "await events".²

On October 8th, 1863, Bakunin and his wife left Stockholm. A company of Poles and Swedes saw them off, and the departure was recorded in the radical press. But the enthusiasm of the first months was spent. Bakunin had become, both politically and financially, something of an embarrassment to his friends; and when at length he embarked at Gothenburg for London, everyone breathed more freely. The Russian Minister, a week later, reported his departure "with joy" to Petersburg. Only the Austrian Government still trembled and sent another circular

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, 125-9, 131-2; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 90, 98; *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 116; *Steklov, M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 226, 256.

² *Steklov, M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 265; *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 126.

to the frontier authorities warning them that Michael Bakunin had left Sweden for "an unknown destination", and that strict watch was to be kept for him on all frontiers.¹

The two-year period in Bakunin's life which began with his arrival in London at the end of 1861 could not be brought to an end without a reckoning with the person who had played the largest and most conspicuous rôle in it—Alexander Herzen. When Bakunin first reached London, *The Bell*, still at the height of its popularity and power, had a circulation of 2500 or 3000. Now, less than two years later, it was lucky to sell 500 copies; and Herzen, smarting from a sense of unmerited defeat, traced Bakunin's hand in every step of its decline. It was Bakunin who, in concert with Kelsiev, had involved *The Bell* in the affair of the Old Believers. It was Bakunin who, by working on the impressionable Ogarev, had thrown *The Bell* into the arms of the young revolutionaries, and had induced Herzen himself to conclude an alliance with the hollow sham of *Land and Liberty*. It was Bakunin who had made *Land and Liberty* ridiculous by flaunting it in his wild intrigues with Swedes and Finns. It was Bakunin who, most fatally of all, had persuaded him to pledge *The Bell* to the cause of Poland, and thereby earn the hatred of every Russian patriot. Even in those Russian circles which, two years ago, had devoured *The Bell* as the organ of enlightened Russian opinion, Herzen was now branded as a traitor and a friend of terrorists. The sequence of events was too close for Herzen to realise that he was the victim of circumstances beyond the power of any man to control, and that the short heyday of Russian liberalism, which *The Bell* had so brilliantly represented, was irrevocably past. He sought a scapegoat; and he turned on Bakunin with the vindictiveness of a weak man who has been lured against his better judgment into a fatal course. About the time Bakunin left Stockholm, the Russian press triumphantly quoted the statement of an obscure Pole that "Herzen and Co." had lured the Poles into rebellion by boasting that they were at the head of a vast conspiracy which would break out all over Russia; and Herzen, beside himself with rage and mortification, declared that he would publicly

¹ *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, vii. 126-7; unpublished circular in the Archives of the Ministry of the Interior, Prague.

disavow Bakunin in the columns of *The Bell*.¹

Political bitterness was reinforced by personal resentments. The quarrel with Sasha had added a fresh complication. For though Herzen professed a cool impartiality, and condemned the boy's "insolence" as much as the older man's vanity and garrulity, it is clear that, in his heart of hearts, he found the sins of his own flesh and blood more venial than those of his old friend. There was, moreover, the eternal irritant of Bakunin's light-heartedness in money matters—those "petty faults" which Herzen was half ashamed to mention, but which none the less revolted his orderly mind. He had been dunned for Bakunin's debts in London. He had sent a further £50 to Stockholm in July. His patience was ebbing fast; and he dreaded yet another of those fruitless discussions which began with a childish apology for past irregularities and ended with an equally childish appeal for a fresh loan.²

Bakunin, though cast for the rôle of defendant, looked forward to the meeting with far less trepidation than the complainant. He could never see the use of living in the past; and he was always prepared to brush aside past actions, whether of himself or others, with the same indifference as past debts. He sincerely respected Herzen's immense talents, though he refused to bow the knee to Herzen's worldly wisdom and scepticism, so right on points of detail, so wrong and so abhorrent in substance and spirit. He did not realise, any more than Herzen himself, that *The Bell* was an utterly spent force. He still believed, with his inveterate optimism, that its influence could be employed in the interests of revolution. But about Herzen he had no illusions.

Herzen [he wrote at this time] has presented, and continues to present, the Russian cause magnificently before the public of Europe. But in matters of domestic policy he is an inveterate sceptic, and his influence on them is not merely not encouraging, but demoralising. He is, first and foremost, a writer of genius; and he combines all the brilliant qualities with the vices of his profession. When liberty has been established in Russia, or when it begins to be established, he will be, beyond question, a powerful journalist, perhaps an orator, a statesman, even an administrator. But he decidedly has not in him the stuff of which revolutionary leaders are made.

¹ Herzen, ed. Lemke, xvi. 491-2, 516.

² Herzen, ed. Lemke, xvi. 267, 492, 539; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 123.

These words show a finer appreciation of Herzen's real qualities and defects than any portrait of Bakunin to be found in Herzen's writings.¹

When the Bakunins reached London, Herzen was in Italy on a visit to his daughters. His absence postponed the reckoning and eased the tension. Ogarev, gentle, warm-hearted, and impressionable, listened sympathetically to Bakunin's version of the story. As regards money matters, he had always shared Bakunin's incapacity to attach the smallest importance to them. It was unthinkable that they should become a cause of serious friction between the old friends. As regards the quarrel with Sasha, Ogarev felt that Herzen had indeed been prejudiced by "dynastic" considerations, and that Sasha might at least have been made to beg the older man's pardon for his rudeness. As regards politics, there were no doubt minor differences about method and tactics. But what were these when weighed against a common lifelong devotion to the cause of liberty? Personal loyalties apart, Ogarev stood far nearer, by temperament and inclination, to Bakunin's eager impulsiveness than to Herzen's clear-headed, calculated caution. Let bygones be bygones, and let them all continue to work together in the sacred cause. To "disavow" Bakunin would only weaken them all and rejoice the common enemy. Ogarev wrote to Herzen a letter of mingled pleading and reproach which showed how far he had been won over to Bakunin's side.²

Towards the end of November 1863, after a stay of six weeks, the Bakunins left London for Brussels and Paris; and at Paris, in the first week of December, took place the long-deferred meeting between Bakunin and Herzen. "I shall see Bakunin," wrote Herzen on the eve of it, "though I find the prospect terribly distasteful; for I detest falsehood." But outwardly at any rate the encounter passed off better than might have been expected. There was a strong desire on both sides to avoid awkward topics. Herzen was too weary or too ashamed to refer to "private affairs"; and in the field of politics he found Bakunin "whole-heartedly anxious for peace and determined to do nothing to make a scandal". For the moment Bakunin had had

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 230-31.

² *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 538-9; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 148, 150.

his fill of adventures. He was never afraid to admit that he had been wrong and that other men had been wiser than he; and Herzen, who lacked this generous quality, was astonished at his docility. It would not last for long. But it permitted the two former friends to part on terms of seemingly unbroken cordiality. Bakunin perhaps believed that there had been a full and sincere reconciliation. But Herzen could not so readily forgive or forget. Herzen's career was finished. His caution and good sense had left him stranded on a flat and arid waste, while the twin torrents of reaction and revolution surged on either side. Bakunin's indomitable foolhardiness and eternal youth were still bearing him forward on the crest of the wave. Herzen was conscious that his own well-ordered talent was dwarfed and overshadowed by this towering, undisciplined force. Twenty-five years ago, he had entered in his diary against Bakunin's name the comment "Worthless character!"; and now once more he found compensation in dwelling on those glaring defects which gave so easy a handle to all Bakunin's enemies. Relations between the two men could never again become intimate. Herzen, in his subsequent dealings with Bakunin, never shook off the mood of half-contemptuous, half-jealous exasperation engendered by the experience of these two years.¹

The day after the interview, Herzen returned to London; and a few days later the Bakunins moved southwards. After a short stay at Geneva, they spent Christmas at Vevey with Sleptsov, formerly a ringleader of *Land and Liberty*. But Sleptsov was "nervous almost to the point of insanity", and would require "many buckets of cold water on his head" to make him of any use to anyone. From Vevey, Bakunin made an excursion to Berne to visit his old friends the Vogts. Louisa Vogt, whom he had not seen since he bade her farewell on leaving Switzerland twenty years before, threw her arms round his neck and burst into tears of emotion. He found that Karl, the eldest son, had fallen a victim to "an unshakeable faith in the star of Napoleon". But he converted the whole family to the cause of Poland, and the ladies formed a committee to collect funds for the relief of distressed Poles.

On January 11th, 1864, the Bakunins crossed the frontier into Italy.²

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvi. 541-3.

² *Steklov, M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 283-4.

CHAPTER 23

FLORENCE

BAKUNIN had come to Italy an ardent disciple of Italian nationalism. After a short halt at Turin, he and Antonia were received in Genoa by Bertani, Garibaldi's principal lieutenant in Northern Italy; and their first duty on Italian soil was to make a pilgrimage to Caprera, where the protagonist of Italian freedom—now an almost legendary figure—lived in retirement with a small colony of faithful supporters.

The visit to Caprera was the culmination of a short-lived but characteristic cult. For a brief moment Garibaldi seemed to fill to perfection the rôle of Bakunin's ideal revolutionary hero. In the glorious days of 1849 he had planted the republican standard in Rome itself and held the city for several days against the forces of reaction, represented by corrupt priests and French mercenaries. In 1860 Bakunin had followed anxiously from Siberia the March of the Thousand, which had liberated Southern Italy and overthrown a reactionary dynasty. It was true that the net result of Garibaldi's successes had hitherto been, not the establishment of a republic, but the aggrandisement of a monarchy. But Bakunin himself had in his day made concessions to expediency and toyed with the idea of a popular monarchy. It was enough that Garibaldi was the scourge of Austria and the liberator of Italy. The liberation of the Slavs, the break-up of the Austrian Empire, and the cause of social revolution were still blended in Bakunin's subconscious mind. He who served one of these aims necessarily promoted the others.

In his retreat on Caprera, the leader was invested with every accompaniment of romance. In Turin, Antonia had nearly died of cold. On Caprera, the climate at the end of January was that of a Russian summer. The Bakunins made the crossing to the island in the company of four other pilgrims, an Englishman and three Englishwomen. Garibaldi, limping slightly from the wound of Aspromonte, received them in his simple stone house, surrounded by a garden of olives, vines, and Southern fruit-

trees. Here he lived with his young peasant wife (whom, to the annoyance of one of the Englishwomen, he treated with marked deference), his two sons, a political secretary, and twelve stalwart henchmen. The life of the little community, as they worked in the fields in their linen trousers and red shirts, or ground corn in the mill, or rested "in picturesque poses" on the rocks, seemed to Bakunin the prototype of "a democratic social republic", and reminded him (for romanticism died hard in nineteenth-century minds) of the Pirate's Isle of Byron's *Corsair*. Bakunin detected in his host's bearing "a deep, hidden sorrow". Garibaldi assured the visitor that he was weary of life, and would gladly sacrifice it for the good of his country or for "the freedom of all peoples". He had thought of going to Poland to help the insurgents, but the latter had sent a message to say that he would do more harm than good there. Bakunin remembered that he had had exactly the same experience; and this common reminiscence convinced him more than ever of the natural bond between them. When, at the end of a three-days visit, the Bakunins returned to the mainland, Michael confessed himself "in love with Italy", and swore to his wife that within a month he would speak Italian.¹

They settled in Florence. The choice was symptomatic of Bakunin's mood. Although destined soon to become the temporary capital of the new Italian State, Florence was never an important political centre. The working-class population was small and unorganised, and revolutionary intrigue and propaganda were unknown. Florence was mainly inhabited by good Italian *bourgeois* and by an extensive colony of foreigners in search of cheapness, quietude, and picturesque surroundings. Here Bakunin was content to remain for upwards of a year, indulging an unfamiliar taste for idleness and relaxation.

The reminiscences of Russian tourists and residents in Florence give some curious glimpses of Bakunin's life and personality at this time. On Gué, the famous painter, who noticed his shortness of breath and "unimaginable appetite", he made the impression of "a great ship without masts, without a rudder, drifting before the wind and not knowing why or whither". Modestov, a young man who was writing a thesis on Tacitus for a university degree, was shocked to discover that Bakunin "ex-

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 284-6.

pected every educated man to be a revolutionary". Mechnikov, a young scientist who had fled from Russia on account of his political opinions and had fought in Garibaldi's legion, has left a vivid and satirical picture of the "At Homes" to which the Bakunins invited their friends on Tuesday evenings.

The drawing-room is furnished in the height of *bourgeois* decorum. The formidable revolutionary in a black frock-coat, which he succeeds, however, in making look picturesque and abominably untidy, is quietly playing draughts with his Antonia. . . . A grey-haired old man of benign appearance is accompanying himself on the piano and singing in a little bird-like voice with a strong German accent:

Allons, enfants de la badrie
Le Chour de cloire est arrivé . . .

and the challenging revolutionary hymn sounds on his lips like some sugary, sentimental ditty.

It turns out that the singer is not a German, but a Swede, one of Bakunin's Stockholm friends, and that he has some sort of mysterious relationship, affinity, or affiliation with revolution.

Gradually the guests assemble. What a mixture of clothes and faces, of races, languages, and classes! With the exception of a few *habitués*, you rarely saw the same face twice running at these "evenings".

Bakunin himself glowers at them, and explains to you that these are Antonia's guests, or that those are people whom he absolutely must see for the sake of the success of some dubious illicit enterprise. Next week you hear not a word of the great man of last week. It is lucky if he has merely disappeared; more often the disappearance was the result of some more or less open scandal.

A few only of those who attended these gatherings were in any way noteworthy. Sasha Herzen, who had come to Florence to pursue his studies at the University, buried the hatchet with the easy-going Michael and—somewhat to his father's alarm—became a frequent visitor at the Bakunins' flat. But Sasha's interest in politics had been based on nothing more solid than personal vanity; and from this time forward revolution ceased to play any part in his life. The presence of Pulszky, Kossuth's famous coadjutor, was a reminder of Bakunin's former support of Hungarian national aspirations, though the Hungarians had never shown reciprocal sympathy for Bakunin's revolutionary ambitions. Ludmilla Assing, a niece of Varnhagen von Ense, took a traditional interest in advanced political thought. But

her efforts were for the moment mainly devoted to the pursuit of a handsome young Italian named Gianelli, who moved in Bakunin's circle. Bakunin's taste for match-making was scarcely less persistent than his passion for revolution; and he scandalised some of the onlookers by his active interest in this affair of the heart.¹

Intermittently and rather half-heartedly, Bakunin continued to dabble in revolution. He occupied himself with the task of finding Italian intermediaries who would smuggle into Russia, through Galatz or Constantinople, *The Bell* and the other publications of Herzen's Russian press; and this service no doubt encouraged him to ask Herzen for a further loan of 600 francs—out of which Herzen conceded a meagre 200. But Bakunin's main active concern in the summer of 1864 seems to have been a revival of his interest in Freemasonry. Dolfi, a baker by trade and the leader of the Mazzinist party in Florence, was also Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge. The secrecy and ritual of Masonry retained their appeal for Bakunin. He resumed his long-dormant membership; and when he left Florence in the following year he carried with him a recommendation from the "Grand Consistory of the Scottish Rite" in Florence "to all the brothers and highest organs" of Masonry in Italy. The illusion was not long-lived. Two years afterwards, he wrote to Herzen that Masonry might be "useful as a mask or as a passport", but that "to look for anything serious in Masonry is no better, and perhaps worse, than to seek consolation in wine". But this subsequent renunciation does not invalidate the sincerity of his earlier interest. In 1864 Bakunin was as ready as he had been in the 'forties to assume that Masonry might become a mainstay of revolution; and he himself was strongly influenced by it in one important respect.²

Before coming to reside in Florence, Bakunin had not found it necessary to define his attitude towards religion. In early manhood he had abandoned the theory and practice of the Orthodox Church. But he had shown hostility to Christianity; and though he "adhered to none of the existing religions", he firmly main-

¹ Gué, *Severnyi Vestnik* (March 1894), p. 235; Modestov, *Istoricheski Vestnik* (December 1883), p. 122; Mechnikov, *ibid.* (March 1897), pp. 807-34; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 153.

² *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 150-51, 156, 164; Herzen, ed. Lemke, xvii. 135; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 539.

tained that religion was "necessary to us all". He spoke constantly of his belief in God. On one occasion he declared that he was "seeking God in revolution", on another, he boldly affirmed that "God is freedom". Sometimes he attributed his love of music to religious feeling. In London, as he strolled through the streets with Turgenev on a moonlit evening of May 1862, he fell into an "old-fashioned romantic vein", asserted his belief in a personal God, and criticised Herzen for his lack of faith. On his visit to Caprera, he noted with satisfaction that Garibaldi believed "in God and in the historical mission of man". But now, exposed to Masonic influences, his thought took a definitely anti-religious colour. In Catholic countries, and most of all in Italy, Masonry had long been subject to proscription and persecution by the Church; and by a natural reaction it became anti-clerical and dogmatically atheistic. The principal product of Bakunin's Masonic period is an essay (apparently not intended for publication) in which he enunciated for the first time the famous formula:

God exists, therefore man is a slave. Man is free, therefore there is no God. Escape this dilemma who can!

And the paper ends with a draft *Catechism of a Freemason*, which declares that belief in a personal God is incompatible with reason and with human liberty and replaces the cult of a "creator of the universe" by the cult of humanity.

It was a moment of some importance in Bakunin's life. At the age of fifty he became, for the first time, a convinced and fervent atheist. Atheism will henceforth figure at the head of all his political programmes.¹

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Bakunin could not long remain satisfied with an organisation whose revolutionary flavour was so faint and in which he played so subordinate a rôle. Before the end of the summer he had grown impatient of a life of inactivity tempered by Freemasonry. Belated letters from Sweden—from Straube, the Danish bookseller who was to establish surreptitious communications with Petersburg, and from a certain Folkstrue, who had succeeded

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 111, 370; iv. 19, 232; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xxi. 332; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 285.

Quanten as his chief agent among the Finns—tempted him to revisit the scene of his last year's dramatic triumphs and not less dramatic failures. It is not clear what results he hoped to achieve. The Polish insurrection was now a matter of history. *Land and Liberty* had perished. In Russia reaction was stronger, and propaganda more difficult, than ever. But Bakunin was undismayed. On May 1st, 1864, he wrote to Demontowicz, who was still in Stockholm, to announce his approaching arrival and to express "fraternal confidence" in his former colleague's "fraternal assistance". He reached Stockholm on September 6th.¹

It may be assumed that Bakunin would not have undertaken so expensive a journey without serious financial inducements or prospects. From Stockholm he wrote to his brothers at Premukhino that he had "arranged his business pretty well", since Swedish editors had offered to take articles and correspondence from him to the tune of 4000 francs a year. This striking announcement was, however, evidently designed to sugar the subsequent request for an immediate loan of 1000 roubles to cover certain "troublesome" debts; and though he wrote from Florence in December 1864 that he was earning 100 francs a week, "and sometimes more", for correspondence in the Swedish press, only a single article in the *Aftonbladet* bearing his signature can be traced for the whole of this period. It is not improbable that Bakunin proffered his services to, and received advances from, various Swedish newspapers. But if so, the promised articles remained unwritten or unpublished. Nor was this second visit productive in other respects. There were no further royal receptions, or complimentary banquets, or public speeches; and if Bakunin tried once more to use Sweden as a base for propaganda in Russia, he must have been quickly disillusioned. Towards the middle of October 1864 he slipped away unnoticed from Stockholm for the last time.²

On his way back to Italy he spent a fortnight in London—his last visit to that city. He called on Herzen, who found him "far more peaceful" than of yore; and he went to a tailor to replenish his wardrobe. The tailor was a German named Lessner, a former member of the Communist League and a close associate of Marx. Lessner informed Marx of his new customer. The name

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 159; Stëklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 302.

² Stëklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 302-3.

stirred many memories. In spite of the mutual mistrust which had kept them apart when Bakunin was living at Paddington Green, Marx felt a tinge of curiosity about the turbulent revolutionary whom he had last seen in Berlin sixteen years ago. It was just a month since the inaugural meeting of the International Working Men's Association (known to history as the First International); and Marx was a member of the committee which was even now drafting the rules and the inaugural manifesto of the Association. Perhaps it occurred to him that Bakunin might serve some useful purpose in the new organisation. Perhaps he knew of the rift between Bakunin and Herzen, and suspected that the former might now be more amenable to his influence. In any case he wrote to Bakunin offering to call on the following day. The answer was favourable, and the interview took place on November 3rd, 1864—the eve of Bakunin's departure for Florence.

This meeting—the last occasion on which Michael Bakunin and Karl Marx met face to face—became many years later the subject of bitter controversy between the two principals and their respective followers. Most of the extant accounts of it were written years afterwards, when clouds of prejudice had obscured the issue; and the only record possessing any serious claim to be regarded as accurate is contained in a letter which Marx wrote to Engels on the following day. This record, brief and jejune as it is, bears witness to the queer illogical fascination which Bakunin, almost alone of men, could exercise on the abnormally unimpressionable Marx. "I must say", wrote Marx, "that I liked him very much—better than before." He was "one of the few people whom I feel, after sixteen years, to have moved forwards, not backwards". The conversation naturally struck a reminiscent note. Marx spoke feelingly of the "Urquhartite calumnies"; for the absurd charge against Bakunin, though it had first appeared in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, could now, thanks to the recent performances of Francis Marx and the *Free Press*, be fathered on to the wicked Urquhartites. They talked of the Polish insurrection of the previous year. Bakunin explained that its failure was due to the refusal of the Polish aristocrats to proclaim "peasant socialism". He declared that "now, after the collapse of the Polish rising, he would take part only in the socialist movement". That was all A few personal

compliments and greetings brought the interview to an end.

The most curious feature of this record is the absence of any mention of the First International, whose affairs are discussed by Marx at length in the earlier part of the same letter. An account of the conversation penned by Marx five years later amply makes up for the omission. According to this later version, Marx in the course of the interview "received" Bakunin into the International, and Bakunin "promised to work for it to the best of his ability". But this version is open to grave suspicion, being manifestly designed to magnify the turpitude of Bakunin's subsequent attack on the International by emphasising his obligations to it. It is difficult, in the face of the silence of the letter to Engels, to believe in this "reception" of Bakunin into the fold; and when he finally enrolled himself in the International in the summer of 1868, nobody seems to have suggested that he had already been a member for nearly four years. Bakunin, as his own account admits, read and admired the inaugural manifesto written by Marx; and, with his habitual enthusiasm for new ideas, he would certainly have expressed sympathy and proffered assistance. It was on the nature of that assistance that the misunderstanding arose. Marx, who loved order and precision, had no use for the collaboration of anyone who did not offer unquestioning loyalty and obedience. Bakunin, fundamentally undisciplined, might lead but could never follow. He would help the International. But he would help it in his own way and at his own good pleasure.¹

The interview of November 3rd, 1864, was fortunately too short to reveal these temperamental differences. The two men separated, well pleased with each other and with the prospects of a partnership in which each tacitly assigned to himself the predominant rôle. Back in Florence, Bakunin received three letters from Marx in less than three months, sending him copies of the inaugural manifesto, and begging him to forward one to Garibaldi and to make arrangements for an Italian translation. Bakunin's reply of February 7th, 1865, has been preserved. He addresses Marx as his *carissimo amico*, warmly accepts the tasks entrusted to him, and expresses disgust at the sloth and backwardness of the Italians, which put the brake on all revolution-

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xvii. 368; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiii. 210-21; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 305.

ary activity. "Only the persistent, energetic, and passionate propaganda of socialism", he declared, "may yet restore life and freedom to this country." He concludes the letter by kissing the hands of Marx's wife and daughters, and proposing an exchange of family photographs. Thereafter the correspondence appears to have languished; and for more than four years there were no direct dealings between the future rivals. But Marx continued for some time to hope that Bakunin could be used to undermine Mazzini's position in Italy and to recruit "some live Italians" for the International.¹

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One of the many issues not discussed at the famous interview between Bakunin and Marx was the issue between secrecy and publicity in revolutionary organisation. Marx, like Herzen, was a lifelong believer in publicity. Bakunin had clung, ever since 1849, to a rooted conviction of the necessity of secrecy for serious revolutionary work. On his way back from London to Florence, he stopped in Paris, and here (for the first time, so far as our records go) he began to canvas for the formation of a secret revolutionary "Brotherhood". How far this step was inspired by his conversation with Marx or by desire to help the newly-founded International, must remain a matter for conjecture. On Bakunin's return to Florence, the Brotherhood began to take shape in the form of a group of his local disciples. But there is no evidence that any of the "brothers" were aware of any connexion between the Brotherhood and the International, or had indeed even heard of the latter. It was unlikely that the members of any society founded by Michael Bakunin would be encouraged to look to any authority other than his own.

The paucity of the records and the unreliability of Bakunin's own subsequent statements make it impossible to give any clear account of the purposes or supposed functions of the Brotherhood. He often spoke afterwards as if the secret societies over which he presided in later years were no more than a prolongation of the Florentine Brotherhood of 1864. It was composed mainly or exclusively of disgruntled Italian intellectuals. Mechnikov describes the "brothers" in caustic terms as "men

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 136-7; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiii. 273, 276.

of no occupation, who were attracted by curiosity, if not by a dubious desire to fish in those troubled waters which Bakunin always stirred up wherever he appeared . . . retired Garibaldian volunteers, advocates with little practice in the courts, the most variegated types". But the most circumstantial witness to these proceedings is a young professor named Gubernatis, who met Bakunin casually one evening at the house of Pulszky. Before they had even been introduced, Bakunin fixed him with his eye "as if he were trying to bewitch me with his glance". Gubernatis was enthusiastic and impressionable, and his narrative is marked by a certain naïvety which evidently belonged to his character. But the rôle played by Bakunin himself was certainly not less naïve.

Bakunin got up from his seat, came over to me, pressed my hand and asked me with an air of mystery whether I was a Mason. I replied that I was not and did not want to be, having a distaste for secret societies. . . . Bakunin answered that I was right, that he himself did not attach much importance to Freemasonry, but that it served him as a means of approach to something else. Then he asked me whether I was a Mazzinist and a republican. I replied that it was not in my character to follow a single man, however great, and that I might well be a republican, but never a Mazzinist, though I recognised that Mazzini had performed great services to the cause of freedom; that a republic in itself seemed to me an empty phrase. . . . What was required now was freedom, what was required now was a transformation of society in which all would be equal not merely in law, but in such questions as the distribution of bread, which is not at present uniform for all, since some enjoy a superfluity while others are in want. At this point Bakunin pressed my hand warmly and exclaimed: "Well, you are our man; we are working for that. You must join our work. . . . The reactionaries act in concert, the supporters of freedom are scattered, divided, and at variance; it is essential to bring about a secret agreement between them on an international scale."

The eloquence of Bakunin fascinated and persuaded the faltering Gubernatis. Feeling that his new convictions were incompatible with the tenure of a government appointment, the young professor resigned his post, was introduced to the Brotherhood, and for a short time became the hero of the little circle. Bakunin spoke of him everywhere as "the best of the Italians", and put his photograph in an album between those of Mazzini and Garibaldi. But Gubernatis soon perceived that the

brothers, while they talked much of revolution, did nothing to promote it. He demanded work. He was ready to deliver lectures on the history of the people's movement or to stump the country as an itinerant preacher of the cause; and as an earnest of his devotion and his capacities, he composed a new revolutionary hymn entitled *La Sociale* to take the place of the insufficiently international *Marseillaise*. But he found the other brothers markedly less energetic; and the ideas of Bakunin seemed limited to the childish game of inventing every week a new cypher in which the brothers might correspond with one another. Gubernatis became thoroughly disillusioned; and he was embarrassed, as time went on, to observe that Bakunin seemed "altogether absorbed in the collection of contributions, ostensibly for the poor Poles, but in reality for himself and for the more needy of the brothers". Bakunin's extraordinary nonchalance in such matters is attested by the painter Gué, who saw him receive a gold piece from a Swede as a donation for the Poles and, there and then, in the presence of the donor, send out a servant to change it and buy tobacco.

The ingenious Bakunin employed yet another device to maintain the loyalty of the faltering Gubernatis, in whom he recognised a zeal and disinterestedness rare among members of the Brotherhood. A Russian girl of a family remotely related to the Bakunins, the Bezobrazovs, happened to be in Florence; and Bakunin successfully arranged a match between his distant kinswoman and his young Italian disciple. The marriage failed, however, to produce the result which its sponsor had intended. Gubernatis grew more and more disillusioned with the Brotherhood, and before long left Florence. "Before my departure", ends his story, "I compelled Michael Bakunin to dissolve his secret society after I had attacked it in a cutting speech, which would perhaps have cost me my life if the society had continued to exist." The gullible Gubernatis had taken at their face value Bakunin's tales of the awful penalties which the society would exact from defaulting members.¹

Whether Gubernatis was right in supposing that the Brotherhood had been dissolved before his departure, or whether there was any dissolution at all, remains unknown. But in any event it came to an effective end when, at the end of May 1865,

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 76-7; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 291, 294-6.

Bakunin left Florence with Antonia to spend the summer at Sorrento. Bakunin did not return to Florence. It is possible—though not particularly probable—that some of the Florentine brothers belonged to later societies created by him. But the Florentine Brotherhood as such vanished from the scene in the summer of 1865, and left no trace behind.

CHAPTER 24

NAPLES

It is unlikely that Bakunin would in any case have been content to remain much longer in the backwater of Florence. But the motive of the southward move was of a personal character. Paul and his wife Natalie—the unknown sister-in-law with whom Michael had corresponded so passionately from London—were travelling in Italy. They had visited Florence earlier in the year. In May 1865 they were staying at Sorrento; and here Michael and Antonia came to join them. But family ties were weakening. It was too late now, when Michael was past fifty and Paul well on in the forties, to recreate the raptures of childhood and youth. Michael no doubt continued to importune his brother about his share of the family estate. But common memories could not make up for the lack of common interests. The meeting brought no renewal of intimacy, but rather a realisation of indifference. It did, however, produce a passing effect. It momentarily turned Michael's thoughts to the past; and a few days after Paul and Natalie had gone, he wrote to them that he had begun his memoirs. This burst of energy was as transitory as most of Michael's literary projects. The one extant autobiographical fragment from his pen (which may or may not have been written at this time) does not carry him beyond the age of seventeen.¹

In the summer lassitude of Sorrento, as they sat drinking tea on a verandah which overlooked the bay, Antonia reading a novel and Bakunin toying with his memoirs, another echo of the distant past began to haunt him. He remembered Georg Herwegh, his idol of more than two decades ago, and wrote a letter inviting the poet to draw up "a clear programme for the party, which would explain its principles to the people, and indicate what action was required at the present time". Herwegh may be excused if, after fifteen years of respectable retirement from the political arena, he was in some doubt what party and

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 313; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, i. 25-37.

what principles were meant. He had lost both the enthusiasms and the energy of his brilliant youth; and a bitter quarrel with Herzen, whose wife was fair and frail, had given him a marked distaste for dealings with Russians. He replied briefly that he was an enemy of all parties, and rejected Bakunin's flattering, but surprising, invitation.¹

At the beginning of October the Bakunins moved into Naples. The choice seems to have been determined by no more profound reason than proximity. Bakunin knew nobody in Naples but the elderly Miss Reeve, who had been governess at Orsett House when he was in London, and now kept a little English school in Naples. Miss Reeve's address would serve for secret letters (if anyone wished to write him any). Other political uses she had none. But the Bakunins, alone in Naples, conceived a sudden and sincere affection for the English spinster. Bakunin found her "the one live person in Naples"; and when suddenly, five weeks later, she died of cholera in Antonia's arms, Bakunin wrote Herzen a letter whose terms are without parallel in his later correspondence:

She had become a habit with me, intellectually and emotionally. Every time I read something remarkable or had an idea, I would hurry off to talk and argue about it with her. Rarely have I met so agreeable, so intelligent, so sympathetic a human being.

Bakunin in middle life was still capable of such impulsive, childish devotions even for people too poor to give him material assistance and too timid to share his political aspirations.²

Politically the first impressions of Naples were altogether unfavourable. "Reaction here", he had written to Herzen within a week of his arrival, "increases not daily, but hourly." He intended, before the winter was out, to return to Florence; and he predicted that "unless some exceptional and unforeseen event occurs in Europe", life in Italy would soon become intolerable. Europe, from the point of view of a revolutionary, remained depressingly calm. But an exceptional and unforeseen event occurred during the winter in Naples. Bakunin met there a remarkable Russian woman who provided him with financial support on a scale which would have made the most reactionary

¹ *Briefe von und an Georg Herwegh*, p. 8.

² *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 161-3.

of countries seem a desirable place of residence. Naples was to be the home of the Bakunins for two years, from the autumn of 1865 to the autumn of 1867.

The Princess Obolensky belonged, by birth and marriage, to two of the most ancient and respected families of the Russian aristocracy. In the winter of 1865-6 she established herself with her children at Naples, living in princely state amid an army of tutors, governesses, and domestic servants. Distaste for the society of her husband and a preference for life abroad were not in themselves sufficiently rare phenomena to make Zoe Obolensky conspicuous. The scandal of her position arose not from the eccentricity of her behaviour, but from the unorthodoxy of her political creed. She missed no opportunity of parading extreme radical opinions; and she gathered round her in Naples a bevy of hot-heads and revolutionaries, Italian and foreign, whose political zeal was recompensed by her munificence. Among her satellites and beneficiaries were two Slavs: Mroczkowski, a dexterous Pole, who now or later became her lover, and Michael Bakunin. The association between Bakunin and the Princess brought ample rewards to both. His revolutionary prestige raised her to the status of an authentic conspirator; and her wealth assured to Bakunin and his wife a greater profusion of material comforts than he had ever known since he first set out from Russia on his wanderings twenty-five years before. Two years later Bakunin estimated his pecuniary indebtedness to the Princess at 7000 francs. What relation this figure had to the benefactions which she actually bestowed on him, it is impossible to guess.¹

Political conditions in Naples proved less unpropitious for revolutionary propaganda than Bakunin had feared. The home of reaction, was, in fact, a fertile breeding-ground for the subterranean intrigues so dear to his heart. The "liberation" of the Kingdom of Naples and the unification of five-sixths of the Italian peninsula had left behind it, five years after the event, an aftermath of increasing dissatisfaction. The impetuous Italian temperament had looked forward to the coming of a golden age, and had been disappointed to discover that the current alloy still contained a generous admixture of baser metal. The national cause had triumphed, but its triumph had

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 159; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 354.

done nothing to relieve social discontent. It was among these disgruntled nationalists that the Princess Obolensky found her courtiers, and Bakunin his new disciples. Most of them were professional men. The most conspicuous of them were Friscia, a doctor, Fanelli, an architect and engineer, both of whom had taken part in the revolution of 1848-9, and Carlo Gambuzzi, a lawyer, who became one of Bakunin's closest friends.¹

In these conditions, so much more favourable than those prevailing in Florence, Bakunin repeated or continued his Florentine experiment. Taking as his nucleus the circle which gravitated round the brilliant figure of Princess Obolensky, he founded a new secret society which he boldly styled an International Brotherhood. The rules which Bakunin drew up for this society have survived, and served as a pattern for other societies subsequently founded by him. The Brotherhood was to be divided into two categories: the International Family and the National Families. The International Family was to be the aristocracy or directing organ of the Brotherhood, and was to have a twofold character, both as an open and a secret society. In its former capacity, it was to conduct legal propaganda; in its latter, to make subterranean preparations for revolution. The keynote of the whole constitution was strict discipline; for Bakunin, even when his aims became avowedly anarchistic, remained a staunch believer in autocracy as a *modus operandi*. Every member of a National Family owed unquestioning obedience to the National Junta or executive committee; and each National Junta took its directions from a Central International Directorate, whose relations to the International Family remain obscure. Both active and "honorary" members (the latter being sympathisers, "in particular, persons possessed of a considerable fortune", who did not engage in active work) were required to swear an elaborate oath of fidelity to the Brotherhood. The oath was taken on a dagger, and "unsparing vengeance" (like that which poor Gubernatis had feared in Florence) was threatened against anyone who violated it. Finally, the constitution thus laid down was to be regarded as provisional; for when the Brotherhood attained a membership of seventy, a constituent assembly was to be convened which would determine the definite rules and programme of the organisation.

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 77.

The last-named provision throws a certain light on the numerical strength of the Brotherhood. It is clear that, when Bakunin penned these documents, its membership was not yet within measurable distance of seventy; and none of the National Families or National Juntas existed except on paper. In fact, the International Brotherhood was probably no larger than the purely Italian Brotherhood in Florence; and the "international" label seems to have been justified only by the presence of the Princess, of Mroczkowski, and of another Pole named Zagorski. But Bakunin made up for its shortcomings by magnificent make-believe. In the summer of 1866 he described the new organisation in enraptured terms in a letter to Herzen.

After three years of hard work, I have achieved definite results. We have friends in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, in England, Belgium, France, Spain, and Italy, we have Poles, we have even a few Russians. In Southern Italy; the greater part of Mazzini's organisation, the *Falanga Sacra*, has gone over to us. . . . The whole people, particularly in Southern Italy, is joining us in masses, and we are poor not in material, but in *educated* people of conviction and ability to give shape to this material.

The friends scattered through almost every country in Europe were, in fact, as mythical as the masses of Italian supporters. Reports of a later date name individual Spaniards, Frenchmen, and Belgians as members of the International Brotherhood. But except in one or two cases, these reports appear to be the result either of Bakunin's unflagging imagination or of confusion with later societies founded by him.¹

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The brilliant patronage enjoyed by the new Brotherhood helped to blind the brothers to its lack of political substance. In the summer of 1866 Princess Obolensky moved to Casamicciola on the island of Ischia, where she engaged a whole wing of a large hotel for her family, her retainers, and her guests. The Bakunins were permanent members of the establishment. In these quasi-royal surroundings, Bakunin (to quote the words of Vyrubov, a young Russian disciple of Comte who came to him with letters of introduction from Herzen and Ogarev)

¹ Vyrubov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), p. 51; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 327-8; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 171.

played providence, arranged promenades and picnics, instructed everybody, managed everybody, issued orders to everybody, which did not hinder him from writing numerous long and didactic letters in different languages to the different sections of the World Brotherhood. Everyone obeyed him unquestioningly, and worshipped him with reverence. He was in fact head and shoulders above those around him and, notwithstanding his benevolence, he had the temperament of a drill-sergeant.

The Bakunins had at their disposal a sailing-boat with a crew of two, in which Vyrubov joined them in "a great zoologico-botanico-mineralogical expedition" along the shores and among the islands of the Gulf of Naples.¹

But these agreeable pursuits did not long divert Bakunin from more serious preoccupations.

At the beginning of our acquaintance [proceeds Vyrubov's narrative] Bakunin, like a true conspirator, treated me with distrust. About nine or ten o'clock in the evening he would often be visited by several strange, mysterious personages. He would explain to me that it was an important deliberation, and would beg me to go and sit with Tonia, who was generally on the verandah.

Presently, however, Bakunin's recruiting instinct was too strong for his mistrust, and he handed to Vyrubov, "with a strict injunction to show it to nobody", the programme and constitution of the Brotherhood.

The next day [Vyrubov continues] I returned this strange document to Bakunin, and told him that I could not bear political conspiracies. Although I am of the most radical way of thinking and am prepared to defend it with all my might, I will defend it only face to face and not by underground methods. But Bakunin would not so easily release his predestined victim.

"You have seen that we have member sympathisers, who are not called on to take part in any conspiracies, but only to help by word and pen to disseminate our ideas. We must certainly enrol you among them."

"Well, if you like, but I don't much care about those oaths on daggers."

"Oh, they aren't necessary. We invented that for the Italians. We are content with your word. Do you agree?"

"On those conditions, I agree."

He rose, solemnly announced that he received me as a member of the World Brotherhood, embraced me, and said:

"Now, as a new brother, you have to pay 20 francs."

¹ Vyrubov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), pp. 47, 53-4.

At this practical conclusion I could not help laughing, and he smiled with his good-natured cheerful smile.

Such is the only circumstantial account which has come down to us of the operation of the International Brotherhood founded by Bakunin in Naples. The methods of the Brotherhood were farcical, and its achievements nil. But it is a distinguished landmark in Bakunin's biography. Bakunin himself was so pleased with it that it became a model for all his subsequent organisations; and the *Revolutionary Catechism* which he wrote as its programme is a critical turning-point in the development of his political thought.¹

In the two years since he arrived in Italy and made his dutiful pilgrimage to Caprera, Bakunin had moved far and rapidly. He had first been drawn to Italy by national reasons; and his enthusiasm for Italian nationalism had for a moment seemed to compensate him for the disappointment of his Polish ambitions. But the compensation proved fallacious. The victory of nationalism, far from bringing in its train the victory of revolution, had left the social question untouched. Liberated Italy, instead of surpassing other nations in "prosperity and greatness", surpassed them only in beggary. The great Italian leaders shed their revolutionary lustre. Three months after receiving Bakunin in Caprera, Garibaldi visited London, was tempestuously welcomed by the British *bourgeoisie*, and assured a cheering crowd at the Crystal Palace how much he admired their devotion to the "dear Queen". Bakunin thought this "what the French call *niaiserie* and, in Garibaldi's position . . . pernicious *niaiserie*". Mazzini was still more dangerous. Bakunin's new, uncompromising atheism could not tolerate the mystical flavour of Mazzini's nationalism, the appellation of *Falanga Sacra* which he gave to his organisations in Italy, the equation which he strove to establish between democracy and religion. All this was pure opportunism. Men like Garibaldi and Mazzini were not revolutionaries at all. In the pursuit of a narrow nationalist ideal, they played fast and loose with both sides. The time was coming when the true revolutionaries of all countries would be compelled to take a stand against their "patriotic-bourgeois rhetoric".²

¹ Vyrubov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), pp. 51-2.

² Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 315; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 157, 171.

The *Revolutionary Catechism* is the first document in which Michael's renunciation of nationalism as a revolutionary agent is proclaimed, and the outlines of his anarchist creed clearly enunciated. It starts in the true Bakunin style by demanding "the radical destruction of all existing institutions, religious, political, economic, and social", and the establishment of "a universal society based on liberty, reason, justice, and labour". It denies the existence of a personal God, and declares that the human reason and the human conscience are the sole criteria of truth. Politically, it proclaims the "annihilation, dissolution, and moral, political, judicial, bureaucratic, and financial bankruptcy of the tutelary, transcendental, centralised State, the twin partner of the Church and, as such, the permanent source of pauperisation, deception, and enslavement of the peoples". Having thus laid down the essential postulates of anarchism, the *Catechism* still shrinks, however, from the logical conclusion. While formally condemning the State, Bakunin at this period still accepts the nation as his unit, and even provides for national parliaments. The nation is formed of a federation of "absolutely autonomous" communes, and the "revolutionary nations" form in turn an "international federation", which will act as "a close alliance against the coalition of reactionary countries". Socially and economically, individuals will enjoy complete equality. The right of inheritance will be abolished. Classes and ranks will disappear; and "free marriages" between equal partners will replace "religio-juridical" unions. The day of individual national revolutions is past. The peoples all the world over can be united, inspired, and "electrified" only by a programme of social-democratic revolution.¹

It was an important moment in Bakunin's career when, in the summer of 1866, he finally emerged from the wilderness of confusion between revolution and nationalism into which he had strayed, under Polish impulses, in 1846. The scales fell from his eyes. He perceived that there were now only "two camps, two fatherlands: one revolution, the other counter-revolution". He discovered that, as Marx had proclaimed in the famous *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, "the proletarian had no fatherland", and that nationalism could as easily become the ally of counter-

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 337-42.

revolution as of revolution. The time of "Messiah-nations" was past. Henceforward the work of revolution, free from nationalist entanglements, would proceed on new and sounder premises. The Italian interlude in Bakunin's life represents the transition from the revolutionary nationalism of his middle years to the revolutionary anarchism of his last period.¹

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The winter of 1866-7 was destined to be Bakunin's last in Italy. After more than three years, interrupted only by a single journey to Sweden, the narrow world of Italy began to pall. In March 1865 Herzen and Ogarev had transferred themselves and *The Bell* from London to Geneva; and since that time Bakunin's thoughts had more than once turned longingly towards the Swiss frontier. Other motives contributed to the final decision. Until the spring of 1867, the Italian authorities had shown complete indifference to Bakunin's presence and proceedings on Italian soil. Now rumours began to circulate that he was engaged in forging Italian bank-notes, or encouraging subversive movements in Sicily and Southern Italy. By an odd coincidence Kiselev, the Russian diplomat who had once been responsible for his eviction from Paris, was now Russian Minister at Victor Emmanuel's Court in Florence. Bakunin convinced himself that Kiselev was the author of these new attacks, and was trying to induce the Italian Government to expel him from Italy. The official archives fail to confirm this impression. But Bakunin's perturbation was not unnatural. He threatened to challenge to a duel a harmless professor who had repeated the offending rumours; and in later years he liked to tell the story that he had been driven from Italy by police persecution. In fact, nothing of the sort happened. But uncertainty and apprehension sufficed to increase his restlessness.²

The factor which eventually clinched Bakunin's determination to leave Italy was the departure of his munificent patroness. In May 1867 Mroczkowski made a journey to Switzerland, France, and Belgium, in search of new recruits for the International Brotherhood. Herzen, whom he visited in Geneva, had

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 157-8; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 142.

² *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 164, 204-5, 208-9.

refused from the first to have any truck with Bakunin's societies. But Mroczkowski was successful in enrolling at least two new members: Emil Vogt, a son of Bakunin's old friends at Berne, and Caesar de Paepe, a Belgian doctor, who was afterwards a prominent figure in the International. The real purpose of his journey was, however, probably concerned with the affairs of the Princess. Her liaison with Mroczkowski was by now common knowledge, and her political opinions still more notorious. Prince Obolensky was excusably indignant. He succeeded about this time in placing an embargo on the ample revenues which the Princess had hitherto enjoyed; and the necessity imposed itself of adopting a more modest way of life. Switzerland was selected for the experiment. Some time during the summer, the Princess and her lover established themselves in a villa at Chaponeyre, near Vevey, on the Lake of Geneva.

A plausible occasion soon occurred for Bakunin to follow in their wake. The growing tension between Prussia and France had become a manifest menace to European peace; and in June 1867, a strong international committee issued a general invitation to "all friends of free democracy" to attend in the following September a Congress at Geneva, the object of which was vaguely defined as "the maintenance of liberty, justice, and peace". Bakunin decided to take part in the Congress. In the middle of August 1867, the Bakunins left Italy for Switzerland, and Bakunin's public appearance on the international stage at Geneva initiated a new and active period in his career.¹

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A domestic postscript must be added to the story of Bakunin's life in Italy. It argued a certain measure of affection on the part of his girl wife that she had travelled across two continents to join him. But as his political preoccupations increased, her indifference to them grew more patent; and the absence of any common interest or sentiment between husband and wife struck all who saw them. In Florence, Mechnikov reports that they moved in different circles, and were rarely seen together save when they entertained, on the same evening, their mutually uncongenial

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 194; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 332; *Annales du Congrès de Genève* (Geneva, 1868).

groups of friends. In Naples, Vyrubov paints a somewhat different picture of Bakunin's domestic environment.

He lived at the extremity of the town on high ground. The view from the windows of his spacious flat was delightful: you could see the whole of Naples which, under different names, edged the gulf with a narrow unbroken fringe of habitations, and in the background there stood out the conical form of magnificent Vesuvius. But though he rarely left the house, he never looked out of the window. The beauties of nature did not appeal to him, and he had no time for them. He spent the whole day exhorting somebody or writing long letters to the four corners of the earth. Meanwhile, his silent, dreamy Antonia, his junior by a quarter of a century, sat from morning to night on the balcony, admiring and enraptured by the landscape. It was a strange marital or, to speak more correctly, quasi-marital union. . . .

In his way he was very fond of his wife. He was affectionate with her, and, so far as other more interesting preoccupations allowed, he cared for her welfare; but she was an altogether subsidiary factor in his stormy life.

"Look at my Tonia", he said to me once as she was sitting in the next room. "She is quite stupid and does not in the least share my convictions; but she is very nice, remarkably good-natured, and very good at copying out for me important manuscripts when it is necessary that my handwriting should not be recognised."

But whether the amiable, brainless, and romantic Antonia sought her own social pleasures in Florence, or sat dreaming away her life at a window in Naples, the incompatibility—physical, intellectual, and spiritual—was absolute. At the age of twenty-seven, and after nearly ten years of "quasi-marital" union, Antonia can hardly have retained many more illusions about her elderly husband than he had about her. She was a perfectly normal young woman, and had, as a gallant Frenchman once remarked, "borrowed nothing from the snows of her country but the whiteness of her skin". It was Carlo Gambuzzi, one of Bakunin's lieutenants in the International Brotherhood, who at length took possession of the vacant place in her heart. It was so much a foregone conclusion, and made so little stir, that nobody has troubled to record when or how it happened. Perhaps even Bakunin himself did not know. In days long past he had flared out in jealous rage at Tatyana's supposed inclination for Belinsky; and he could still show fierce resentment of any

political rival. But it did not occur to him to be jealous of his wife and her lover. It was a matter of routine, in which he claimed no right or title to interfere. When the Bakunins left Naples, Gambuzzi accompanied them to Switzerland for the same purpose of attending the Geneva Congress.¹

¹ Mechnikov, *Istoricheski Vestnik* (March 1897), p. 810; Vyrubov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), pp. 47-8; Arnoud, *Nouvelle Revue* (August 1891), p. 594; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, pp. 410-11.

BOOK V

BAKUNIN AND MARX

“Political agitation is as necessary to him as the breath of life.”

POSTNIKOV's report on Bakunin to the Third Division
(September 17th, 1870)

CHAPTER 25

THE LEAGUE OF PEACE AND FREEDOM

WHEN Bakunin left Italy in August 1867, the main lines of his political creed had been finally and firmly established. He believed in a social upheaval of the working class which would lead to the abolition of the "centralised State" and the substitution for it of a more loosely organised society based on the undefined concepts of liberty, equality, and justice. The move to Switzerland entailed not a change of creed but a change of method. In Italy, Bakunin had deliberately shunned publicity, writing nothing of importance, and confining his activities to secret propaganda and organisation. On the free soil of Switzerland, other tactics were called for. While he did not abandon his compelling passion for conspiracy, Bakunin now missed no opportunity of proclaiming his faith to the world in speech and in print. For the five years from September 1867 to September 1872 he was a public figure. During the whole of this time (except for one brief interlude in France), he never had occasion to conceal his identity or mask his opinions. He appeared openly as a teacher and leader of revolution; and to this period belongs the greater part of his literary output.

The first of these five years was devoted to an experiment which proved illusory. The invitation to the Geneva Congress had been extended to "all friends of free democracy"; and the Congress, according to the programme issued by the organising committee, aspired to be the "Assise of European Democracy". But the word democracy was sufficiently wide to cover a multiplicity of political opinions. In the interval between the issue of the invitation and the meeting of the Congress, the signatures of 10,000 adherents were collected. In England, the most prominent signatories were John Bright and John Stuart Mill; in Italy, Garibaldi; in Switzerland, James Fazy, for many years the dictator of Geneva politics; among the French *émigrés*, Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, and Edgar Quinet; among the Russians, Herzen and Ogarev. It was clear from the names of

its principal sponsors that the Congress would turn out to be a predominantly *bourgeois* affair—liberal and pacifist in complexion, but certainly not revolutionary. For the moment it served Bakunin as a platform for his re-entry into the international arena. But a more discriminating revolutionary would not have entertained, even for twelve months, any serious hope of using it as an instrument of his policy.

The second motive which had drawn Bakunin to Geneva—desire to revive the old association with Herzen and Ogarev—was doomed to disappointment. Ogarev was indeed there to greet him. He was living in the suburb of Petit Lancy with his English mistress, Mary Sutherland, her boy Henry, and an illegitimate son of young Alexander Herzen. He was still as charming as ever, still as full of hope and faith, still as eager to listen in all seriousness to the wildest and most unrealisable projects. Ogarev remained for the next few years Bakunin's most faithful friend and most regular correspondent. But the ravages of alcoholism and epilepsy had of late made fearful progress in his enfeebled body and brain; and even so blind an optimist as Bakunin could not fail to see that Ogarev's force was spent. Only tradition, and his long association with Herzen, still gave him his place among the veterans of the revolutionary cause.

Herzen himself was no longer in Geneva. *The Bell*, whose decline had not been arrested by transplantation from English to Swiss soil, had suspended publication at the beginning of July 1867. Herzen went to join Natalie Ogarev in Nice; and thereafter his visits to Geneva were brief and intermittent. He learned without emotion of Bakunin's reappearance. He wrote to offer him, rather grudgingly, the run of his flat in Geneva—"the bare walls, the chairs, and the company of Tchorzewski". But when he heard that Claparède, a Geneva zoologist whom Bakunin had met in Naples, had also proffered hospitality, he hoped that the invitation would be accepted; for Claparède would "remember it all his life". More grudgingly still, he authorised Ogarev to lend Bakunin 100 francs "if he really needs it"—which, of course, he did. There was no warmth left in Herzen's heart for Bakunin, and no desire to see him again. Although he had been among the first to announce his adhesion, Herzen did not, after all, come to Geneva for the Congress; and

Bakunin, Ogarev, and the young positivist Vyruvov were left to represent Russia at the first "Assise of European Democracy".¹

At 2 P.M. on September 9th, 1867, the Congress was opened in the Palais Electoral by Barni, a Geneva professor who had presided over the organising committee. On his right, as delegate of honour, sat Garibaldi, the biggest fish whom the organisers of the Congress had swept into their net. The total attendance was estimated at 6000, of whom probably more than half came from the canton of Geneva. After Jolissaint, a Swiss politician, had been elected president, the assembly proceeded to appoint a Bureau or executive committee. It was agreed that every nationality represented at the Congress should contribute two members to the Bureau; and Bakunin and Ogarev were the Russian members. Everyone present had heard of the achievements and the sufferings of the great enemy and martyr of Russian tyranny. But few had ever seen him; and when Bakunin's name was announced, a ripple of excitement spread over the hall.

As with heavy, awkward gait he mounted the steps leading to the platform where the Bureau sat, dressed as carelessly as ever in a sort of grey blouse, beneath which was visible not a shirt, but a flannel vest, the cry passed from mouth to mouth: "Bakunin!" Garibaldi, who was in the chair, stood up, advanced a few steps, and embraced him. This solemn meeting of two old and tried warriors of revolution produced an astonishing impression. . . . Everyone rose, and there was prolonged and enthusiastic clapping of hands.

Thus did Bakunin take his official place among the leaders of European democracy.²

The object of the Congress, as set forth in its preliminary manifesto, was "to determine the political and economic conditions of peace among the nations, and, in particular, to establish the *United States of Europe*". But the general debate strayed beyond the limits even of this ambitious programme. Garibaldi, in an opening speech which showed him less of a diplomat than a soldier, introduced the religious issue. He attacked the Papacy as "the most pernicious of sects", and begged the Congress "to adopt the religion of God"—a sweeping stroke which offended both the few Catholics and the many atheists among the dele-

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xix. 443; xx. 1, 3, 5, 12.

² Vyruvov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), p. 54.

gates. The International Working Men's Association, at its annual congress at Lausanne, had just passed a resolution (which was presented to the Geneva Congress by a young Swiss, James Guillaume) adhering to the Geneva programme on the understanding that the latter comprised "the emancipation of the working class and its liberation from the power and influence of capital"; and on the next day this theme was developed by another delegate of the International, Dupont. The frank proclamation of socialism as one of the aims of the Congress caused the more conservative delegates to stir uneasily. Garibaldi's advocacy of "the religion of God" provoked gasps of astonishment and dissent on the benches of the Left. But, in general, the audience had come to cheer and to admire, not to criticise; and warm, if indiscriminating, applause greeted every orator.

It was in this atmosphere that Bakunin delivered, on the second afternoon of the Congress, a speech which won him "prolonged applause" from the body of the hall and "warm congratulations" from his colleagues on the Bureau. The text of his remarks is lost to posterity. He spoke (in French) too rapidly for the stenographers; and the report of the speech issued at the time was described by him as "not merely inaccurate but false". Four months later he wrote from memory (he had spoken without a note) a long résumé of his speech for the *Annales* of the Congress. How far the printed text reproduces the spoken word cannot be determined. But it is an eloquent exposition of Bakunin's programme. Describing himself as "the most disobedient subject of the Russian Empire", he protested against the existence of that Empire, and expressed the hope that "its armies would be defeated in some future war undertaken by it". He declared that Russia could only be saved by federalism and socialism; and he plunged into a vigorous denunciation of nationalism (which he himself had once identified with revolution) as the principal tool of reaction.

We must abandon once for all this false principle of nationality which has been invented in these last years by the despots of France, Russia, and Prussia only in order to stifle the supreme principle of liberty. Nationality is not a principle. It is a fact as legitimate as individuality. Every nationality, small or great, has the incontestable right to be itself, to live according to its own nature; this right is merely a result of the universal principle of liberty.

The primary condition of peace is the substitution of international justice for national interests.

From these abstractions Bakunin led up to his now favourite theme—the condemnation of “centralised States”. Until these disappear, you cannot have your United States of Europe. For who can imagine a federation in which France would appear as a unit side by side with the Grand-Duchy of Baden or Russia with Moldavo-Wallachia?

Universal peace will be impossible so long as the present centralised States exist. We must desire their destruction in order that, on the ruins of these forced unions organised from above by right of authority and conquest, there may arise free unions organised from below by the free federation of communes into provinces, of provinces into the nation, and of nations into the United States of Europe.

Although he had named federation and socialism as the agents of his country’s salvation, it is noteworthy that Bakunin devoted practically the whole of his speech to the first of these panaceas. Socialism still occupied a secondary place in his programme. Religion secured, on this occasion, no more than a passing mention.

After the second day of the Congress, Garibaldi left Geneva, and the tone of the proceedings deteriorated. The initial enthusiasm waned. Criticism, dormant while the more distinguished delegates spoke, raised its head; and the religious and social questions, in particular, led to acrimonious exchanges. On the third day speakers were subject to constant interruption. The defenders of religion joined hands with the defenders of the social order in an attempt to wreck what was left of the Congress; and on the fourth and last day, amid almost continuous disorder, a resolution from which every controversial issue had been carefully excluded was carried with difficulty by a show of hands. The resolution provided for the establishment of a League of Peace and Freedom which would hold annual Congresses, and for the appointment of a permanent central committee. For the rest, it confined itself to the expression of vague and pious hopes in favour of the dissipation of ignorance and prejudice, the abolition of standing armies, and the amelioration of the lot of the “working and propertyless classes”. At the conclusion of the Congress there was a banquet. But the embittered atmosphere

of the closing session permeated even this function; and several of the delegates left the table as a protest against the radical and revolutionary character of some of the toasts. Bakunin himself proposed the toast of "the League and its future congresses which, by developing its principles and by uniting more and more closely republicans scattered throughout the world, will hasten the coming of true democracy by federalism, socialism, and anti-theologism".

Such were the rather inauspicious beginnings of that short-lived but well-intentioned body—the League of Peace and Freedom. Bakunin, the inveterate optimist, was well pleased. The Congress, he wrote to Vyrubov, had achieved far more than he expected. It is difficult to discover the grounds of his satisfaction. Most radical observers felt that the League had already revealed its essentially *bourgeois* and conservative character. But if it had not yet been converted to the principles of federalism, socialism, and atheism, Bakunin had an invincible faith in his own power to convert it. The first step would be to convert the central committee, of which he had been appointed a member; and to this task he applied himself with gusto.¹

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It was decided that the committee should hold its meetings in Berne; and there was therefore no reason for Bakunin to enjoy any longer the "heavy hospitality" of Geneva. Princess Obolensky and her lover had installed themselves in the pleasant neighbourhood of Vevey; and to Vevey the Bakunins accordingly moved. Here, throughout a peaceful winter and spring, punctuated by occasional visits to Berne, Bakunin found himself once more a member of the circle which revolved round the revolutionary Princess.

The intervention of Prince Obolensky had seriously curtailed the Princess's munificence. A modest villa replaced the magnificent establishments of Naples and Ischia; and Mroczkowski went into business as a photographer. The composition of the circle had also changed. Of the Italians, only Gambuzzi, now a

¹ *Annales du Congrès de Genève* (Geneva, 1868); Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 41-56; Vyrubov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), p. 72. A fuller account of the Geneva Congress has been given by the writer in *International Affairs* (November-December 1935), pp. 837-44.

more or less regular adjunct of the Bakunin *ménage*, was left. But their place was quickly and satisfactorily filled by a group of young Russians. The reaction which set in in Russia after the Petersburg fires and the Polish insurrection had produced a fresh wave of political emigration. The shores of the Lake of Geneva became the favourite refuge of this new generation of Russian exiles; and among these young men Princess Obolensky found a new court of revolutionary admirers, and Bakunin fresh recruits for his International Brotherhood.

Several of them were destined to play a certain rôle in Bakunin's life during the next few years. The most conspicuous was Nicholas Utin, the Jewish student whose flight from Petersburg in the summer of 1863 had been one of the symptoms or causes of the collapse of *Land and Liberty*, and who, for the past two years, had been living in Geneva and Montreux. Bakunin had first seen him in London in the autumn of 1863. He had encountered him again four years later at the Geneva Congress, where the young man expressed an exaggerated devotion to Bakunin's ideas and person; and there Utin must first have met the Princess. Next in importance was Nicholas Zhukovsky, who had made a brief appearance in 1862 in connexion with the affairs of *Land and Liberty*. He was now living in a villa at Clarens near Vevey with his wife Ada and her married sister Olga Levashov, who enthusiastically shared his radical opinions. Zhukovsky's own means were small. But Olga Levashov was sufficiently wealthy to provide the circle with some compensation for the loss of Princess Obolensky's benefactions; and it was doubtless this which enabled first Utin and his wife, and then the Bakunins, to install themselves in the Zhukovsky villa. Of the other members of the circle less intimately connected with Bakunin, the most noteworthy was Alexander Serno-Solovievich, brother of the protagonist and principal victim of *Land and Liberty*. Excitable and nerve-ridden (he spent some time in the Geneva asylum and eventually died by his own hand), Alexander was the fire-eater and irreconcilable of the group. Another, Michael Elpidin, owed his importance mainly to his acquisition of a printing-press at Geneva. The latest recruit to the group was a self-educated young French working-man, of political and literary ambitions, Benoît Malon, who was living under the patronage of a rather less young French Egeria,

Madame de Champseix, who wrote novels under the pen-name of André Léo.¹

These new associations dealt a final and shattering blow to Bakunin's relations with Herzen. When Herzen moved in 1865 from London to Geneva, he had hoped to find there, among the growing colony of Russian *émigrés*, new disciples and new readers of *The Bell*. It was a naïve calculation. The radicals of the 'sixties, vigorous with the clear-eyed disillusionment of youth, had no intention of bowing down to the outworn and discredited liberalism of the 'fifties. Instead of followers, Herzen found in the young Russians of Geneva merciless and implacable critics. Both their creed and their tactics were ruthless to a point which Herzen had scarcely even imagined. They jeered openly at his moderation, at the mock respect with which he still treated Alexander II, at his sentimental faith in the future of Russian constitutional democracy. In the spring of 1867 Alexander Serno-Solovievich published a long and scurrilous indictment of Herzen and all his works; and when Herzen had written indignantly about it to Bakunin in Italy, the latter had replied with a spirited eulogy of the new generation, and had seen in Herzen's anger "a touch of senility". Now Bakunin was openly associating with these impudent young hotheads. Herzen was not surprised. He took refuge in sarcasm, and referred contemptuously to "the Cossacks of Vevey and Ataman Michael". Once or twice he encountered Bakunin in Geneva. But he avoided a quarrel by shunning serious argument. "There is no news of Bakunin", he reported to Ogarev after one of these meetings, "except that his trousers have lost their last buttons, and keep up only by force of habit and sympathetic attraction."²

In the meantime, Bakunin worked with unwearying energy on the central committee of the League of Peace and Freedom, which was presided over by Gustav Vogt, the youngest of the four brothers whom he had known as young men more than twenty years ago. His visits to Berne must have given him the welcome opportunity of renewing his warm personal relations both with the Reichels (for Reichel was now married to a Russian wife) and the Vogts. But nothing of these visits is recorded save the

¹ Bakunin, *Œuvres*, i. 2; vi. 269; Herzen, ed. Lemke, xvi. 439; xx. 276; Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 133, 183; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 409.

² Herzen, ed. Lemke, xx. 21, 182, 274; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 206.

proceedings of the committee. Its constitution was peculiar. The League had been organised on a national basis; and voting in the committee was by nations. The Russian delegation consisted of Bakunin and Zhukovsky, the Polish of Mroczkowski and Zagorski; and these two delegations, under Bakunin's leadership, formed the left wing of the committee. The Swiss, the French, and the Italian delegations (Gambuzzi being a member of the last) represented the solid *bourgeois* majority which had controlled the Geneva Congress. Two English trade unionists who had attended the Congress were selected to represent England on the committee; but distance and lack of funds prevented them from putting in an appearance. The Germans came, but were so divided among themselves that they could seldom vote at all.

From the first moment Bakunin dominated the proceedings. Taking as his cue the toast which he had proposed at the Congress banquet in Geneva, he submitted to the committee a long thesis, for adoption as the programme of the League, entitled *Federalism, Socialism, and Anti-Theologism*. The document was circulated to the Committee, and was even set up in print with the sub-title *Reasoned Proposal made to the Central Committee of the League of Peace and Freedom by M. Bakunin, Geneva*. But when Bakunin reached the third division of his subject, his pen ran away with him. After devoting to the denunciation of religion twice as much space as to both the other "isms" put together, he abandoned his task; and the work remained, characteristically, both unfinished and unpublished. Nor did Bakunin at first convince the majority of his colleagues on the committee. He did indeed induce the committee to reject religion and declare that morality "ought to be based on the idea of justice inherent in man". But a motion that the League should include among its aims "a radical transformation of the economic position of the working class" was lost by the casting vote of Gustav Vogt, who complained bitterly of Bakunin's "intrigues"; and a proposal to add to the title of the League the epithets "democratic and republican" was more easily defeated. The most stalwart optimist might have despaired of weaning the League from its ingrained *bourgeois* prejudices.¹

¹ Bakunin, *Œuvres*, i. 1-205; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 386-91; Herzen, ed. Lemke, xx. 128.

Bakunin, however, persevered; and his efforts were crowned with a degree of success which went far to justify his confidence in his powers. A further meeting of the committee took place at Berne on May 31st and June 1st, 1868, its agenda being to make arrangements for the next annual Congress, which was to be held at Berne in September. Since the previous session there had been a remarkable change of front. The majority of the committee now followed Bakunin's lead with perfect docility, and adopted a programme far more radical than anything which would have been approved by the Geneva Congress, or by the committee itself in the preceding autumn. It bore the clear imprint of Bakunin's authorship, and its substantive paragraphs ran as follows:

The League recognises that it is absolutely essential not to separate the three fundamental aspects of the social problem: the religious question, the political question, and the economic question. It therefore affirms—

(1) that religion, being a matter for the individual conscience, must be eliminated from political institutions and from the domain of public instruction, in order that the churches may not be able to fetter the free development of society;

(2) that the United States of Europe cannot be organised in any other form than that of popular institutions united by means of federation and having as their basic principle the equality of personal rights, and the autonomy of communes and provinces in the regulation of their own interests;

(3) that the present economic system requires a radical change if we wish to achieve that equitable division of wealth, labour, leisure, and education, which is a fundamental condition of the liberation of the working classes and the elimination of the proletariat.

Bakunin was legitimately pleased at this endorsement of his religious, political, and social doctrine. "At last", he wrote triumphantly to Ogarev on June 14th, 1868, "we have got it through!"¹

The last and most contentious paragraph of the programme bears witness to a new and important influence. Whatever promise Bakunin may have given to Marx in London, nearly four years ago, to help the cause of the International, had long been forgotten or ignored. Nor did Bakunin's interest revive

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 71; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 217.

when he heard the address from the International read at the opening session of the Geneva Congress, and listened to an impassioned speech delivered on its behalf by Dupont. His own speech at the Congress did not contain, if the record is exact, the remotest allusion to the International and its affairs. When, moreover, during the Congress, he received from Marx a presentation copy of the newly published first volume of *Capital*, he was so little impressed, or so much preoccupied with other matters, that he forgot to write and thank the donor. But some time during the winter or spring, as he shed the last remnants of Herzen's democratic liberalism and his revolutionary hopes began to centre more and more exclusively on the discontent of the working masses, his thoughts turned to the Association which, more than any other, was attempting to organise those masses for a revolutionary purpose. In March 1868 there was a builders' strike at Geneva, in which the strikers, for the first time in history, sought and obtained the support of the International. Evidently it was a body which was beginning to count. Elpidin, and perhaps others of the circle in which Bakunin now moved, had joined it. Bakunin looked again at its literature; and when he came to draft the declaration for the central committee of the League of Peace and Freedom, the demand for "the liberation of the working classes and the elimination of the proletariat" was an obvious paraphrase of Marx's formulae of "the emancipation of the working classes" and "the abolition of all class rule". Having gone so far, Bakunin took a logical and momentous step. In June or July 1868, introduced by Elpidin, he enrolled himself as a member of the Geneva section of the International.¹

If Bakunin believed that the future of the revolutionary cause lay with the International, the most straightforward course for him would have been to abandon the League of Peace and Freedom. But the matter did not present itself to him in that light. Many members of the International had attended the Geneva Congress; and now that, under his persuasion, the League of Peace and Freedom seemed about to adopt a programme identical with that of the International, there was less reason than ever to see any incompatibility in simultaneous membership of both organisations. Moreover, a new ambition dawned

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 305; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 395-6.

on Bakunin's active mind—an ambition inspired in part by sincere desire to further the fortunes of the International, in part by motives of personal ambition. If he was now to devote himself to the service of the International, it was hardly consonant with his character or with his reputation to be content with the humble rôle of an ordinary member. His entry into the International must be a dramatic and significant event. He conceived the bold plan of concluding an alliance between the League and the International which would make him, the prime mover in the League, co-equal with Marx, the directing spirit of the International. The League would thus serve him as a stepping-stone to that position in the International to which his personality and his record entitled him.

Bakunin set to work with his usual impetuosity. When the committee met again in August, he induced it to approve, and to send out with the invitations to the Congress, a circular which recommended a close alliance between the League of Peace and Freedom and the International, and ended with a remarkable declaration of allegiance to the latter.

In order to become a beneficial and active force, our League ought to become the purely political expression of the great social-economic interests and principles which are now being so triumphantly developed and disseminated by the great International Association of Working Men of Europe and America.

A logical mind might have wondered why the International could not serve as the "purely political expression" of its own interests and principles, and why another organisation was required for that purpose; and there was indeed no reason except that a place of honour must somehow be found for Bakunin. The committee, through its president, sent its greetings to the Congress of the International which assembled at Brussels at the beginning of September, and invited its members to attend the forthcoming Congress of the League. Bakunin himself canvassed Becker, a German veteran of the 1848 revolution, a friend of Marx and a member of the Geneva section of the International, who was to attend the Brussels Congress; and he wrote to the Belgian De Paepe a letter, which was read at the Congress, expressing regret that he was unable to come to Brussels in person. He even forwarded to the secretariat of the

Congress a document embodying his views, which he described as "the programme of Russian social democracy". He could at least feel that he had left no stone unturned; and he sat down to await developments.¹

Developments occurred, but not those which Bakunin had hoped and foreseen. He had, in truth, laboured not wisely but too well. He had overplayed his hand; and this odd mixture of importunity and self-assurance alienated many of those whom he sought to win. The International had grown in strength during the past year. The opinions of Marx, who bluntly dubbed the League of Peace and Freedom "the Geneva wind-bag", had made headway. The Congress of the International, meeting in Brussels at the beginning of September, rejected the invitation to send official delegates to Berne, and passed with only three dissentients (De Paepe among them) a resolution which ended with the following curt declaration:

The delegates of the International consider that the League of Peace has, in view of the work of the International, no *raison d'être*; they invite this society to join the International,² and its members to apply for admission to one of the branches of the International.

It was a hard blow for Bakunin. Always confident, always incapable of gauging the effects of his behaviour on others, he had exposed the League to this crushing rebuff; and he now had to face the reproaches of colleagues whom he had persuaded against their will into this disastrous course. The retort of the Brussels Congress was really unanswerable. Bakunin had gone so far to demonstrate the identity of the League's aims with those of the International that he had provided the latter with conclusive proof that the League was superfluous. Gustav Vogt, with the vindictiveness of a weak man, wrote to Bakunin sarcastically referring to "his friends of the International" and enquiring what he proposed to do next. In a long apologia, Bakunin attributed the mishap to a "certain clique whose centre you can doubtless guess as well as I" (though Marx was, in fact, not at Brussels), and boldly declared that, at the Berne Congress, he would "reply in the name of the central committee to this insolent proposal". Something he must clearly devise; for

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 71-2.

² The original draft, which appeared in the press, read still more truculently, "to dissolve itself".

not only had his scheme for hitching the League to the star of the International ended in a fiasco, but his personal prestige in the revolutionary movement was at stake.¹

The second Congress of the League of Peace and Freedom duly assembled in the Swiss capital on September 21st, 1868. It did not rival its predecessor as a popular oratorical tourney. Only about 100 delegates put in an appearance. But unlike the delegates at Geneva, they knew their own minds and were not susceptible to rhetorical persuasion. When the Congress opened, the solid *bourgeois* character of the League was once more apparent. By persistence and sheer vigour Bakunin had carried the committee with him, almost in despite of itself, into declaring for "a radical change" in the "present economic system". But his ascendancy over the committee did not extend to the rank and file of the Congress. He could no longer have any illusions about the revolutionary potentialities of the League of Peace and Freedom. He had come prepared to denounce the "insolence" of the International. He remained to fling the gauntlet of defiance at the League.

The crisis began on the third day of the Congress, when alternative resolutions were submitted on the social question. Bakunin's motion ran as follows:

Considering that the question which presses itself most urgently on our attention is that of the economic and social equalisation of classes and individuals, the Congress declares that, without this equalisation, that is to say, without justice, freedom and peace are unobtainable. Consequently, the Congress puts on its agenda the study of practical methods of settling this question.

The wording was studiously moderate, almost academic; and Vyruhov, who was present, thought the resolution might have been carried if Bakunin had not delivered two eloquent speeches in support of it. The speeches effectively roused all those *bourgeois* fears and prejudices which the text of the resolution seemed designed to allay. In the first, Bakunin publicly proclaimed his espousal of the cause of the proletariat and the principles of the International.

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 67, 72-4.

There is no doubt that if we unfortunately show ourselves to be nothing more than *bourgeois* socialists; if we, by reason of our interests or our prejudices, are unable to attain a broad and sincere understanding of the principles of justice which expresses itself at this time in the struggle of labour against capital, with all its inevitable consequences, its theoretical and practical applications; if we, like dishonest merchants, offer to the workers only fractions of this justice—then they will refuse to have anything to do with us or our wares. They will be a thousand times right to repulse us. We shall find no soldiers for our army of peace, and our whole work that we have undertaken will perish for want of strength and support.

In terms of defiance, which seemed to court defeat, Bakunin invited his hearers, if they were not prepared to embrace the cause of the working class, to “recognise *our* right to tell the workers that you, the Congress of Peace and Freedom, will not satisfy their needs and their lawful demands”.

The second speech, intended as a reply to criticisms, contains a remarkable anticipation of the essence of Bakunin’s subsequent dispute with Marx. At the very moment when he was publicly announcing his allegiance to the International, Bakunin chose—no doubt unwittingly—to proclaim the fundamental differences of principle between himself and its most powerful leader. He had been accused of being a communist. He was not a communist, but a collectivist.

I hate communion because it is the negation of liberty and because humanity is for me unthinkable without liberty. I am not a communist, because communism concentrates and swallows up in itself for the benefit of the State all the forces of society, because it inevitably leads to the concentration of property in the hands of the State, whereas I want the abolition of the State, the final eradication of the principle of authority and patronage proper to the State, which under the pretext of moralising and civilising men, has hitherto only enslaved, persecuted, exploited, and corrupted them. I want to see society and collective or social property organised from below upwards, by way of free association, not from above downwards, by means of any kind of authority whatever. Wishing for the abolition of the State, I wish at the same time for the abolition of personal inherited property, which is nothing more than a State institution, a direct consequence of the principles of the State. That is the sense, gentlemen, in which I am a collectivist, but not a communist.

Whether the differences between Bakunin and Marx are adequately or appropriately summed up in the words collectivism

and communism may be open to doubt. But although the word does not yet appear, it was on this occasion that Bakunin first publicly enunciated the principles of anarchism to whose propagation he was to devote his remaining years.

After this speech, the Congress divided on Bakunin's resolution. It was supported by the Russian and Polish delegations, by the majority of the Italians, and by the single delegate of the United States of America. The majority against it consisted of the delegations of France, Germany, Great Britain, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, and Mexico. The defeat was sufficiently crushing to make impossible any further effective participation by its proposer in the League of Peace and Freedom. Bakunin would have left at once. But he was induced by his friends to remain until the end of the Congress, and even delivered two further speeches—on religion and on nationalism. The former followed familiar lines. It was noteworthy only for the pronouncement that, in order to deliver mankind from the phantoms of religion, "intellectual propaganda" alone was not enough, and "social revolution" indispensable. The speech on nationalism was more important, and was actually the longest of Bakunin's speeches at the Congress. It followed a speech by the Pole Mroczkowski, who, in the name of Poland, "held out a fraternal hand to the Russian social democrats". Bakunin clasped the hand. In a moment of enthusiasm reminiscent of his performance at the Stockholm banquet, he declared that there were forty or fifty thousand revolutionaries in Russia and that the mass of the people were hostile to Tsarist imperialism. In their name he recognised the independence of Finland, the Baltic provinces, Poland, and the Ukraine, and expressed the conviction that even Great Russia would some day give up "forced centralisation" and organise herself on the basis of a "free federation". He challenged the German delegates to renounce in equally clear terms German claims to the Polish provinces, to Schleswig, and to the city of Trieste, which was "far more Slav than Italian, and far more Italian than German". It was a shrewd thrust; for German socialists, however advanced, seldom showed alacrity to accord rights of self-determination to the subject races under German rule. But the national question could not now detain Bakunin for long. In his peroration he drifted back to the all-absorbing idea of the suppression of the State:

It would be a fearful contradiction and absurd naïvety on our part to express, as has been done at the present Congress, the desire to establish international justice, freedom, and peace, and at the same time wish to retain the State. States cannot be made to change their nature, since it is in virtue of that nature that they *are* States, and if they renounce it, they cease to exist. There cannot therefore be a good, just, and moral State. All States are bad in the sense that they constitute by their nature, *i.e.* by the conditions of the purpose for which they exist, the absolute negation of human justice, freedom, and morality. And in this respect, whatever you may say, there is no great difference between the uncouth Russian Empire and the most civilised State of Europe. The Tsarist Empire does cynically what other States do under the mask of hypocrisy; it represents, in its open, despotic, contemptuous attitude to humanity, the secret ideal which is the aim and delight of all European statesmen and officials. All European States do what it is doing in so far as they are not prevented by public opinion and, in particular, by the new but already powerful solidarity of the working classes, which carries in itself the seed of the destruction of the State. Only a weak State can be a virtuous State, and even it is wicked in its thoughts and its desires.

And so I come to this conclusion: He who with us desires the establishment of freedom, justice, and peace, he who desires the triumph of humanity and the complete liberation of the mass of the people, must desire with us the destruction of all States and the foundation on their ruins of a world federation of free productive associations of all countries.

Such was Bakunin's farewell to the League of Peace and Freedom, where he had played for twelve months so disturbing a rôle. At the concluding session of the Congress, he handed in a document headed *Collective Protest of Members leaving the Congress*. It bore fifteen signatures including his own, and ran as follows:

Whereas the majority of members of the Congress of the League of Peace and Freedom have passionately and explicitly pronounced against the economic and social equalisation of classes and individuals, and whereas any political programme or action not aiming at the realisation of this principle cannot be accepted by social democrats, *i.e.* by sincere and consistent friends of peace and freedom, the undersigned consider it their duty to leave the League.

Among the signatories were Zhukovsky, Mroczkowski, and Zagorski, Gambuzzi and the other Italian associates of Bakunin,

the well-known French socialists Élisée Reclus and Aristide Rey, and a working-man from Lyons named Albert Richard, who had met Bakunin for the first time at the Congress. Three or four others, including Utin, did not sign at the time, but afterwards associated themselves with the document.

Once opposing ideas and tendencies of a *bourgeois*-sentimental kind were found to be in a majority [wrote Bakunin afterwards], and once the League was, as the result of this, doomed to turn into the laughing stock which it rapidly became, there was no place in it for a serious and sincere revolutionary. The tool had been tried, it had been found unsuitable, it had to be thrown away; it only remained to seek another. The International Working Men's Association presents itself as such.

For the next four years the International became Bakunin's platform.¹

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 74-6, 78; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, v. 106-15; vi. 272; Richard, *Revue de Paris* (September 1st, 1896), p. 119; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 403-16; Élisée Reclus, *Correspondance*, i. 279-88.

CHAPTER 26

THE BIRTH OF THE ALLIANCE

WHEN Bakunin left the League of Peace and Freedom, he had been for two months past enrolled as a member of the International. He had declared, from the tribune of the League, his allegiance to the International; and the ordinary observer might have supposed that now at length he would place his restless energy unconditionally and unreservedly at the disposal of that organisation. But it still did not occur to him to follow this simple course. He still had no intention of taking his place in the ranks of the International in the humble and inconspicuous capacity of a new recruit. He would march in as a general at the head of his men. And since the League of Peace and Freedom had disappointed his hopes by refusing to supply him with an army, he must create an army of his own. On the same day on which he handed in to the Berne Congress the document announcing his exit from the League, he rallied around him his faithful followers, and founded an International Social-Democratic Alliance.

The foundation of the Alliance was the opening move in the long-drawn struggle between Bakunin and Marx which ended, four years later, in Marx's Pyrrhic victory at The Hague and the break-up of the International. But the spirit in which Bakunin made this momentous move was one not of hostility but of patronage. Far from wishing ill to the International, he would take it under his wing. The Alliance would be recruited from "the members most sincerely devoted to the cause and principles of the International" (who were, needless to say, Bakunin and his supporters); and its object was "to train propagandists, apostles, and, finally, organisers". In short, the Alliance was to provide the aristocracy, or the general staff, of the workers' movement.¹

It was the logical corollary of this conception that the Alliance should be a secret organisation. Bakunin, as he after-

¹ Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 246.

wards related, proposed to his confederates "to join the International *en masse*, while maintaining the intimate link between them and extending the Alliance of social revolutionaries in the form of a secret society". The French and Italians did not, however, share Bakunin's passion for secrecy; and it was decided to constitute the Alliance as an open, not a secret, society. The programme of the new society, hastily drawn up, reflected the ideas which Bakunin had proclaimed at the Berne Congress. It demanded the "political, economic, and social equalisation of classes and individuals of both sexes, beginning with the abolition of the right of inheritance", and summoned the "political authoritarian States" to "reduce themselves more and more to the simple function of administering the public services in their respective countries". Other paragraphs declared the Alliance atheistic, demanded equal education for all, and rejected "so-called patriotism and rivalry between nations".¹

Had Bakunin continued to live in the tranquil isolation of Vevey, far from the centres of political life, the Alliance, like other organisations of his begetting, might never have had more than a paper existence. But its destiny was determined, within a fortnight of its birth, by circumstances totally unconnected with it. In the previous summer Olga Levashov had been induced to invest 1000 roubles of her husband's fortune in the publication of a Russian monthly journal which Bakunin and her brother-in-law Zhukovsky were to edit. Its title, *The People's Cause*, was almost certainly suggested by Bakunin, since it was the title of the pamphlet published by him in London in 1862; and it may be conjectured that Bakunin was the moving spirit of the enterprise. The first number, published in September 1868, was devoted to the exposition of his ideas, and appears to have been written exclusively by Zhukovsky and himself. But while he was absent at Berne or occupied with the affairs of the Congress, his position was suddenly undermined. Nicholas Utin was young, good-looking, and not too scrupulous. Bakunin bitterly attributed his success to the spell which he so easily cast over women.

This little Jew [he wrote in 1871] seems to have a particular attraction for the ladies. They cling to him like flies to a lump of sugar, and he struts and crows in the midst of them like a cock in his hen-run.

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 79, 132-3.

Utin soon acquired sufficient influence over the susceptible Olga to induce her, after the first number had appeared, to transfer to him the control and editorship of *The People's Cause*. The only satisfaction which Bakunin obtained on his return from Berne was the insertion in the second number of a letter from him informing readers that he had ceased to contribute to it. Some years later Utin attributed the change in the control of the paper to disapproval of Bakunin's "anarchistic opinions". But there seems to be little foundation for this hypothesis. Bakunin himself explained the quarrel as "an irreconcilable divergence—not of ideas, for Utin, properly speaking, had none . . . but a complete incompatibility of feelings, temperaments, and aims". It had all the acrimony of a personal feud; and Bakunin afterwards had cause to feel the weight of Utin's powerful and vindictive enmity. The immediate result of this rupture was that Bakunin, who had recently been living on Olga Levashov's bounty, as formerly on that of Princess Obolensky, found himself deprived of this source of support, and, with it, of his only motive for remaining in Vevey. A larger centre was infinitely more convenient for the organisation of his new Alliance; and in the middle of October 1868 he and Antonia settled once more in Geneva.¹

The transfer of the headquarters of the Alliance to a city which already contained several large and flourishing sections of the International, radically affected the character of the new society, and raised in an acute form the delicate question of its relations to the larger organisation. Of the fifteen seceders from the Berne Congress, only one had followed Bakunin to Geneva—the Pole Zagorski; and he remained, both now and later, a cypher. On his arrival in Geneva, Bakunin completed the Central Bureau of the Alliance by co-opting, on his own responsibility, five members of the Geneva sections of the International, of whom the most important were the German Becker, one of the few revolutionaries whom Marx still treated with some show of respect, and the Frenchman Charles Perron, who had won Bakunin's good graces by being one of the three delegates at Brussels who had voted against the "impudent" resolution condemning the League of Peace and Freedom. The Central Bureau was to form the directing staff of the Alliance. But a rank and

¹ Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 271-3.

file was also necessary. On October 27th, 1868, a public meeting was held in a Geneva café to form a local branch of the Alliance. Eighty-five members "of both sexes" were registered at this meeting; and an official membership of over a hundred was afterwards claimed. "Bakunin rushes about, sweats, shouts, and is organising a workers' association", wrote Herzen, who was in Geneva at the time. But Herzen held characteristically aloof; and of those who enrolled themselves, some were not heard of again, and others appeared later in the enemy camp. Despite all Bakunin's exertions, the Geneva group of the Alliance never consisted of anything but himself and a few of his intimates.¹

It is necessary at this point to keep in mind the vague and unreal character of the organisations created by Bakunin, and his amazingly casual methods of recruiting them. These methods, already remarked in the case of the International Brotherhood, are once more in evidence in the early days of the Alliance.

Every day [wrote Bakunin to Zhukovsky at this time] I meet new and excellent friends. I make the acquaintance of each one individually, drink a glass of wine with him—and the thing is done. I already have many friends among the smiths . . . now they are beginning work among the stone-masons.

But Zhukovsky significantly records that these conversations, which would go on all night, were often monologues by Bakunin; after which he would take silence for consent, and enrol his puzzled, but unprotesting, hearer in the Alliance. Moreover it is clear that, although the Alliance as founded was quite distinct from the International Brotherhood, a scheme gradually evolved itself in Bakunin's brain by which, just as the Alliance formed a sort of inner circle of the International Working Men's Association, so the International Brotherhood was to form an inner circle of the Alliance, while in the centre of the International Brotherhood there would be a still more select directorate composed of himself and one or two close associates, who would thus remain in ultimate control of the whole revolutionary movement.

Perron, who for a short time enjoyed Bakunin's complete confidence, has left an extraordinary record of a conversation with him on this theme. In the autumn of 1868 he was invited by

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 92-3; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 182; Herzen, ed. Lemke, xxi. 146.

Bakunin, whom he scarcely knew, to visit him. Bakunin assured him that the International was an excellent institution in itself, but that there was something better which Perron should also join—the Alliance. Perron agreed. Then Bakunin said that, even in the Alliance, there might be some who were not genuine revolutionaries, and who were a drag on its activities, and it would therefore be a good thing to have at the back of the Alliance a group of “International Brothers”. Perron again agreed. When next they met a few days later, Bakunin told him that the “International Brothers” were too wide an organisation, and that behind them there must be a Directorate or Bureau of three—of whom he, Perron, should be one. Perron laughed, and once more agreed. The conversation came to an end, and Perron never heard another word of these esoteric organisations. Such schemes did not, and could not, assume concrete shape. They were the idle, disembodied dreams of Bakunin’s ambition. But they were the constant burden of his thoughts and of his conversation, even with men whose revolutionary credentials were as dubious, and of as recent date, as those of Perron.¹

The founders of the Alliance had contemplated the formation of groups in all parts of Europe with a National Bureau in each country. The fulfilment of this project remained equally nebulous and fragmentary. Sections were formed at Lyons and Marseilles, Albert Richard being the moving spirit of the first, and Bastelica, a Corsican, of the second. A Paris section is also mentioned; but nothing is recorded of it save the bare fact of its existence. In Italy, Gambuzzi founded a rather more active branch at Naples; and in November 1868 Fanelli, another of Bakunin’s Italian associates, went to Spain and, profiting by the excitement of the revolution which had just driven Queen Isabella from the throne, established branches at Barcelona and Madrid. In Italy and Spain the International had never struck any roots. In these fields the Alliance might justly claim to be a pioneer.²

But the Alliance could not, and did not, hope to prolong its existence as an independent organisation. Its purpose and

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 420-21, 426.

² Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 180; Richard, *Revue de Paris* (September 1896), p. 122.

raison d'être was to merge itself in the International for the greater glory of Bakunin, and to become the aristocracy and the general staff of the larger organisation. In the middle of December 1868 the Central Bureau of the Alliance at length addressed its application to the General Council of the International in London, forwarding copies of its programme and regulations. It proposed that the local branches of the Alliance should become sections of the International, but should retain their own corporate existence. The Alliance was to retain its Central Bureau in Geneva; and while its members, as members of the International, would attend the annual congresses of the latter, they would hold supplementary meetings of their own at the same time and place. It was tactfully explained that the rôle of the Alliance would be to act as the "initiator" of ideas to which the General Council would give practical effect. The letter was signed by Becker, whose personal relations with Marx were calculated to make the proposal palatable to the latter.

Absorbed in the contemplation of his own ambitions, Bakunin never seems to have guessed that so curious an application would meet with a blank refusal. But to anyone familiar with the disciplined structure of the International and the orderly authority of its General Council, this proposal to create an *imperium in imperio* sounded scarcely sane. Engels volunteered the explanation that "Siberia, a paunch and a young Polish wife have made Bakunin as stupid as an ox". Marx had a more accurate appreciation of the position.

Mr. Bakunin [he wrote to Engels] is condescending enough to be ready to take the workers' movement under Russian patronage. The thing has been brewing for two months. . . . I thought it was still-born and, for the sake of old Becker, meant to let it die a natural death. But the affair has turned out more serious than I supposed; and to pass it over in silence any longer out of respect for old Becker is inadmissible. The Council decided to-night to disavow publicly—in Paris, New York, Germany, and Switzerland—this interloping society. . . . I am only sorry about it because of old Becker. But our Association cannot commit suicide for his benefit.¹

The execution of the General Council's decision was postponed for a week; and meanwhile Marx thought it well to be informed more closely of what was on foot. Now that Becker

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 76; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiv. 147-9.

had gone over to the enemy, he had no confidential agent in Geneva. But he happened to have had some correspondence with Alexander Serno-Solovievich, who was apparently not in the Bakuninist camp. On receipt of the application from the Alliance, he made a pretext for writing to Serno-Solovievich and slipped into the letter the harmless and inconspicuous question: "What is my old friend (I don't know whether he still is my friend) Bakunin doing?" Serno-Solovievich thought that the simplest way of answering the question was to show the letter to Bakunin; and Bakunin, breaking a silence of nearly four years, wrote to Marx.

Bakunin's letter, unless he is to be regarded as a consummate and calculating hypocrite, is sufficient proof of the sincerity of his conversion to the policy of the International. He had recognised the errors of his past and given himself whole-heartedly to the service of the proletariat. His one condition was that he should be allowed to make some conspicuous and dramatic contribution to the cause.

My old friend [he wrote], Serno has shown me the part of your letter about me. You ask him if I am still your friend. Yes, more than ever, dear Marx, because I have come to understand better than ever how right you were when you followed, and invited us all to follow, the great high road of economic revolution, and abused those of us who were losing themselves in the by-roads of national, or purely political, adventures. I am doing now what you began to do twenty years ago. Since bidding a solemn and public farewell to the *bourgeois* at the Berne Congress, I have known no other company, no other world, than that of the workers. My country is now the International, of which you are one of the principal founders. You see then, dear friend, that I am your disciple and proud to be one.

He went on to explain that, though his speeches at the Berne Congress had been published in the last number of the recently revived *Bell*, he had had no political relations with Herzen since 1863 and that "now even personal relations between us have been broken off". There was some exaggeration in the statement. But it was necessary to disabuse Marx of the belief that he shared Herzen's *bourgeois* and Slavophil leanings.¹

Marx was not the man to be moved by this "sentimental introduction", even if it had arrived in time. But on the same

¹ Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiv. 154; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 137-9.

day as it was written—December 22nd, 1868—the General Council had taken its decision on the application of the Alliance. It declared that “the presence of a second international body operating inside or outside the International Working Men’s Association would be the surest means of disorganising the latter”, and that the precedent thus created would soon make it “the toy of intrigues of every faction and every nationality”. It recalled that the Brussels Congress had declared, in the case of the League of Peace and Freedom, that an organisation professing aims and principles identical with those of the International had no reason to exist. On these grounds, it unanimously resolved “not to admit the International Social-Democratic Alliance as a branch of the International Working Men’s Association”. Marx’s threat of publicly disavowing the Alliance was not carried out. The resolution remained confidential, and was communicated only to those interested.¹

It took the Central Bureau of the Alliance more than two months to reply to this rebuff. It remains a matter for conjecture whether the delay was due to uncertainty what to do next, or (as Bakunin afterwards alleged) to the necessity of consulting other branches, or merely to Bakunin’s preoccupation with other matters. The last hypothesis is perhaps the most plausible. It was a crowded moment in his life. These two months witnessed not only the collapse of the old International Brotherhood, but the acquisition of a new and important body of supporters.

The fraternal quality of the International Brotherhood was wearing thin in its new surroundings. The ejection of Bakunin from the control of *The People’s Cause* was a blow to his prestige in Vevey circles; and his withdrawal to Geneva still further weakened his authority. The history of the International Brotherhood from this time until the final convulsion is unknown. But in January 1869 a meeting of its members was held in Geneva. Not more than ten persons were present; and to this modest figure the active membership of the Brotherhood seems to have fallen. Among these only Mroczkowski, and perhaps an Italian named Tucci, survived from the Neapolitan period, the

¹ Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiv. 153-4; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 186-9.

rest being all new recruits from Vevey and Geneva. The ostensible purpose of the meeting was to revise the statutes of the Brotherhood. But it seems to have developed into a meeting of protest against the dictatorial methods of Bakunin, who treated the Brotherhood as his own personal domain and kept every decision regarding it in his own hands; and, after sitting for two days, it adjourned to Vevey, where Bakunin, for financial or other reasons, could not follow. This gesture of defiance brought upon the rebels a scathing letter from Bakunin bearing the superscription *To All These Gentlemen*. He had, he wrote, worked like a nigger for four years (the period which had elapsed since the foundation of the first Brotherhood in Florence), and he had earned some rest. He was perfectly ready to retire from all share in the direction of the Brotherhood; and he sarcastically hoped that this proposal would not be regarded as further proof of a desire to dictate. This threat was sufficient to bring the mutineers to heel. His control of the Brotherhood had been so absolute that in his absence, as they pathetically remarked in their reply, they had "neither information, nor addresses, nor documents". But the wound did not heal. Two months later the International Brotherhood was dissolved. Like the League of Peace and Freedom, it was a tool which had lost its value and could be discarded. Bakunin was now deeply immersed in the affairs of the Social-Democratic Alliance; and the disappearance of the International Brotherhood had only one concrete result—a final rupture between Bakunin and the colony at Vevey. He avenged himself by sarcastic references to their "soft-hearted and rose-rainbow-coloured creed", and pronounced himself a confirmed misogynist—an ungrateful reference to the combined influence of the Princess, Madame Levashov, and Madame de Champseix, two at least of whom had been his generous benefactresses. Zhukovsky alone, a weak amiable man, with a "heart of gold, but no character", remained faithful to Bakunin.¹

Another factor may have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the rupture. Bakunin's letter *To All These Gentlemen* contains an unexplained allusion to "accusations" against his "brother and friend, Carlo Gambuzzi", who had at this time returned to Italy. The nature of these accusations is a matter

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 217-21, 241; Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 131; Vyubov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), pp. 78-9.

of guess-work. But in the autumn of 1868, just before the departure of the Bakunins from Vevey, Antonia had given birth to a daughter. It was common knowledge among Bakunin's friends that Gambuzzi was the father of the child.¹

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It was a singular stroke of good fortune which compensated Bakunin at this time for the defection of the International Brotherhood by a far more solid accession of strength. In the New Year of 1869, representatives of the thirty sections of the International in French Switzerland congregated in Geneva for the purpose of founding a local federation which they called the *Fédération Romande*. Bakunin, now settled with his wife in a flat in Montbrillant, the drab quarter of Geneva near the railway station, offered hospitality to one of the visiting delegates; and he had assigned to him as his guest the delegate of the little mountain town of Le Locle, a schoolmaster, James Guillaume, the same young man who had presented the resolution of the International to the first Congress of the League of Peace and Freedom.

The Congress successfully brought into existence the projected *Fédération Romande*, and founded a new journal, the *Égalité*, which Perron was to edit. But its significance in Bakunin's career was the fast friendship which he concluded with his impressionable guest, who was still in the twenties and possessed the enthusiasm for political innovation proper to his age. "Small, thin, with the stiff appearance and resoluteness of a Robespierre", as Kropotkin afterwards described him, young Guillaume had accepted the International as the last word in advanced radicalism, and had been one of its principal organisers in his native district of the Swiss Jura. He possessed both the virtues and the limitations of the frugal mountaineer. He had seen little of the world and few men not of his race and kind. In the two days which he spent in Geneva, the vivid personality of his host completely captivated and intoxicated him. He felt that he had met for the first time an inspired teacher and prophet; and the next five years of his life were devoted to the loyal service of this new master.

For Bakunin, too, the conjuncture was equally fateful. If,

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 261; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iii. 410.

with all his genius for inspiration and initiative, he had hitherto achieved so little, it was because his disciples had been men, like himself, innocent of method and incapable of orderly disciplined action. His strength had been dissipated because nobody had been there to marshal and organise it. Guillaume possessed a large share of this minor, but necessary, talent. For the next three or four years Guillaume untiringly staged and advertised Bakunin's public appearances, spoke for him in his absences, corrected his manuscripts, rallied his followers and trounced his enemies. He sometimes even administered a measure of salutary criticism to Bakunin himself; for there was in Guillaume a vein of stern, narrow uprightness, which refused to compromise with his revered master's easy-going opportunism. In Bakunin, Guillaume discovered the champion of his warm, but hitherto ill-defined, ideals. In Guillaume, Bakunin enjoyed the most perfect of disciples; and in Guillaume posterity has found the most thorough and meticulous chronicler of the next few years of Bakunin's life.¹

The Fédération Romande having been well and truly founded, Guillaume returned to his native town of Le Locle, full of determination to introduce the new object of his devotion, as soon as the opportunity offered, to his fellow-mountaineers of the Jura; and a few days later he wrote inviting Bakunin to visit Le Locle. Bakunin was too much occupied by the crisis in the International Brotherhood to reply at once. But on January 26th, 1869, he despatched the ultimatum *To All These Gentlemen*; and on the next day, reflecting perhaps that, if he was about to cashier one group of followers, it might not be amiss to recruit another, he wrote to Guillaume what the latter proudly describes as "the first letter I ever received from him". He excused his slowness in replying to the invitation on the ground of "a thousand pressing affairs", the nature of which he did not specify; and he offered to come to Le Locle on any day Guillaume might choose. After some further delay the visit was fixed for Saturday, February 21st, and a few days before the event, Bakunin wrote once more:

If you will allow me, I will stay with you and among you Sunday and Monday, because I mean absolutely to become better acquainted

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 105-8; Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, ii. 196.

with you, and to become, if possible, your intimate friend in thought and in action. I must say that you have made a complete conquest of me, that I feel myself drawn towards you, and that I have rarely been mistaken when I have yielded to such attractions. We shall have so much to tell one another, to discuss and arrange.

Despite these professions of intimacy, Bakunin did not think it necessary to mention to Guillaume the defection of the International Brotherhood. This episode remained completely unknown to Guillaume until the publication of Bakunin's letters some thirty years later.¹

The visit of the great Russian revolutionary made in the little town of Le Locle the sensation on which Guillaume had counted. On the Saturday evening there was a banquet of the local section of the International which, in honour of Bakunin and in concession to his peculiar habits, was prolonged until three o'clock in the morning. On the next evening he addressed a public meeting on the folly of religion, on the grandeur and decadence of the *bourgeoisie*, and on the coming victory of the proletariat; and after the lecture, while the young people danced, the wise men of Le Locle adjourned to another room to hear the great man discourse far into the night on these exciting themes. The impression left by his strange and incalculable personality was enduring. It was remembered long afterwards how Bakunin, throughout his stay among them, had never stopped smoking cigarettes, and how he had defined the seven degrees of human happiness as: "first, to die fighting for liberty; second, love and friendship; third, art and science; fourth, smoking; fifth, drinking; sixth, eating; and seventh, sleeping". It was not thus that men had been wont to talk and think and act in the matter-of-fact little town of Le Locle and in the mountains around; and with the appearance of Michael Bakunin a new planet had swum into the ken of these enthusiastic, but stolid, friends of international democracy.

There had been time, too, for confidential conversations with Guillaume. Bakunin had spoken much of the Alliance, and (notwithstanding the rebuff from the General Council, which he probably omitted to mention) urged the members of the Le Locle section of the International to enrol themselves in its ranks. Guillaume, with that native streak of stubbornness in his

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 120.

character, refused outright. He was not opposed to the programme of the Alliance (though he secretly thought it rather rhetorical in parts). But neither he nor his simple-minded compatriots could see any use for a separate organisation with statutes of its own inside the framework of the International. Privately, Bakunin had whispered to him of other and more seductive plans. He spoke of "a secret organisation which, for several years past, had united in bonds of revolutionary brotherhood a certain number of men in different countries, particularly in Italy and Spain". He read a programme of this "revolutionary brotherhood", and asked Guillaume whether he did not wish to join it. The invitation was extended to Constant Meuron, the doyen of socialism in Le Locle, who remembered the days of the *carbonari* and accepted it with alacrity. But what struck Guillaume was that Bakunin's brotherhood seemed to have little resemblance to "the classic type of secret society where one had to obey orders coming from above". Bakunin's organisation was nothing more than a "free association of men who were uniting for collective action, without formalities, without ceremonies or mysterious rites". It does not seem to have occurred to Guillaume to enquire who were the other members of this brotherhood or where were its headquarters; or if he enquired, he received no clear answer. When Bakunin left Le Locle, Guillaume, though he had expressed readiness, was quite uncertain whether he had enrolled himself in a secret society or not.¹

Another example soon occurred of the misunderstandings which were liable to arise when anyone of an exact mind and habits had to deal with Bakunin. The stalwarts of Le Locle had recently begun to publish a fortnightly journal entitled *Progrès*, devoted to the propagation of the aims of the International. Bakunin's visit was an occasion for soliciting so distinguished a revolutionary to become a contributor to it; and the great man readily promised a regular article. This was, however, not the only service he could render. The circulation of *Progrès* was local; and if one or two copies went as far as Geneva, that was as much as had hitherto been hoped for. But Bakunin had not only an international reputation, but international connexions; and soon after his return to Geneva, Guillaume

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 128-33.

wrote to ask whether some of his friends of the Alliance would not become contributors to *Progrès* and whether he could not find some new subscribers to the journal "in neighbouring countries". The response was surprising, and illustrates Bakunin's magnificent capacity for self-delusion.

I accept [he wrote back at once], we all joyfully accept your proposal. Yes, let *Progrès* become the journal of the Alliance. For the words "Organ of the Democrats of Le Locle" just substitute "Organ of Social Democracy". After that, you can either keep its title *Progrès*, or give it a new one such as *La Revolution Sociale*, which would perhaps be too frank and premature, or *L'Avant-Coureur*—anyhow, as the Holy Spirit moves you.

And next day, "on the motion of citizen Bakunin", the Geneva section of the Alliance decided "to do everything possible to make the *Progrès* of Le Locle the organ of the Alliance". Guillaume, though astonished at this enthusiastic reception of a proposal he had never made, took the matter philosophically. But the Holy Spirit did not move him either to change the name of the paper or to establish any official relations between it and the Alliance. Nor did Bakunin bear any malice. At the end of May 1869 he paid another triumphant visit to Le Locle and the neighbouring town of La Chaux-de-Fonds; and he continued to write for *Progrès*, with unexpected but exemplary regularity, for three or four months.¹

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In the meanwhile, at the end of February 1869, the Central Bureau of the Alliance at last sent its reply to the General Council in London. Bakunin had decided to make a virtue of necessity and declared for submission to the General Council. The letter, which was signed by Perron as secretary of the Central Bureau, proposed that the Alliance as a separate organisation should be dissolved, and its sections enrolled as sections of the International. The rules of the International provided for the admission of "all workers' associations pursuing the same object, namely, mutual aid, progress, and the complete emancipation of the working class". Within these limits, every local section was at liberty to have its own programme and to define its objects in its own way. There was only

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 138-40, 161-3.

one point in the programme of the Alliance to which legitimate objection could be taken, and this was a point of drafting rather than of substance. On March 9th, 1869, the General Council decided to request the Alliance to substitute the phrase "abolition of classes" for the equivocal "equalisation of classes", and to inform it that, subject to this amendment, there was "no obstacle to the conversion of the sections of the Alliance into sections of the International Working Men's Association". It would, however, be necessary for the General Council to be informed of the names of the sections and the numbers of their adherents.

If Marx could have foreseen the consequences which would ensue from the admission to the International of the sections of the Alliance, his ingenuity would have quickly discovered some grounds for a refusal. But he had as yet no serious presentiment of future trouble. He was content with Bakunin's gesture of surrender and drafted the decision of the General Council in a mood of light-hearted triumph. He was particularly pleased at the idea of compelling Bakunin to disclose the numerical weakness of his "legions". The demand for a list of sections and members of the Alliance would, Engels thought, "act on these phrase-makers like a bucket of cold water".¹

Bakunin's "legions" still took their time to complete the act of capitulation. At the end of April, the Geneva section of the Alliance altered its statutes to meet the requirements of the General Council, and reorganised itself as a section of the International, electing a committee which included Bakunin, Becker, and Perron. But it was not until June that the Central Bureau of the Alliance finally proclaimed its own demise and that of the Alliance as a separate organisation. On June 22nd, 1869, Perron at length wrote, in the name of the Geneva section of the Alliance, to announce to the General Council that its demands had been complied with; and on July 28th a letter was despatched by the General Council admitting the Geneva section of the Alliance to the International. The other branches of the Alliance dissolved themselves; and from this time onward the term "Alliance" is applied without qualification to the Geneva section. The registered membership of the section was

¹ Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 192-4, 200-201; Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 140-41; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiv. 171-2.

104; and the sum of 10 francs 40 centimes was duly forwarded to London as its contribution for the current year. After more than six months of difficult negotiation, Bakunin had forced his way, less dramatically than he had hoped, but with a little band of personal followers, into the central organisation of the proletarian movement. The wooden horse had entered the Trojan citadel.¹

¹ Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 202-5, 209-12; Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 270.

CHAPTER 27

THE BÂLE CONGRESS

HAVING thus secured his first objective, Bakunin forgot all about Marx and the General Council, and plunged into the proletarian politics of Geneva; and the first battle which he waged within the International turned on issues altogether different from those at stake in his later and more notorious duel with Marx. The sections of the International at Geneva fell into two groups. The watchmakers and jewellers, who were born Genevese and exemplified the solid caution of the Swiss craftsmen, formed the Right wing; the builders, carpenters, and workers in the heavier trades, the majority of whom were immigrants from France or Italy, represented the Left. The former concentrated on the improvement of working conditions and other practical measures of reform. The latter nourished hopes of a complete social upheaval. Prior to Bakunin's arrival, the watchmakers, thanks to their superior education and organisation, had always succeeded in controlling the central section (which was the common ground for the two groups) and the general policy of the International at Geneva. Bakunin determined to change all that. The orderly *bourgeois* instincts of the watchmakers were thoroughly antipathetic to him. He fanned the spirit of revolt among the builders, denounced the "despotic and secret oligarchy" of the Right-wing leaders, and summarily defined the issue between them as revolution *versus* reaction. Curiously enough, throughout this campaign, which filled the spring and summer of 1869, the Alliance appears to have played no rôle whatever. It met every Saturday. But Bakunin's own estimate of the average attendance is only "twenty or thirty"; and even of those who had constituted the Central Bureau in the previous autumn, several (including Perron himself) had already drifted away. Bakunin owed his commanding position in the Geneva International entirely to his own personality, not to the creaking machinery of the Alliance.¹

¹ Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 219-26.

His energy was still untiring. He became, for the only time in his career, an active journalist. He had been since March a weekly contributor to the *Égalité*, the journal of the Fédération Romande, which was edited by Perron, as well as to Guillaume's paper the *Progrès*; and when, at the beginning of July 1869, Perron left Geneva for two months it was Bakunin who replaced him. In July and August the columns of the *Égalité* were filled by him almost single-handed. His articles in the *Égalité* during the year 1869 included one on the Geneva strikes (in the course of which he rather surprisingly preached abstention from violence and warned the strikers against provocative action); one on his old theme, the break-up of the Austrian Empire by the forces of revolution; a series in which he trounced the now moribund League of Peace and Freedom; another series on popular education; and several articles on the policy of the International. His literary output at this time was more regular, if not more prolific, than at any other period of his life.¹

But it was not long before this stormy petrel was once more a centre of disturbance. The annual Congress of the International was to be held at Bâle in September; and in August a general assembly of all the Geneva sections was convened in order to decide on a programme and select delegates. The most momentous questions on the agenda of the congress were proposals to abolish private property in land and the right of inheritance—embarrassing topics for the watchmakers, who were steady believers in the rights of property, and considered that the discussion of these utopian proposals was pure waste of time. Bakunin was heart and soul with the abolitionists. He thoroughly enjoyed trouncing the moderates, and secured a sound majority for abolition among the Geneva sections. But when it came to appointing the three delegates who were to represent Geneva at the Bâle Congress, a spirit of compromise prevailed. Two members of the majority and one of the minority were elected, and Bakunin's name was only fourth on the list of candidates. A note in the *Égalité* attributed this rebuff to the fact that his presence at the Congress as the delegate of other sections had already been arranged; for Gambuzzi had procured him a mandate from Naples, and Albert Richard from Lyons. But it is plausible to suppose a certain reluctance on the part

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 80; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, v. 13-218.

of the cautious Genevese to be represented by so controversial a personality. There was at first no intention of appointing a separate delegate for the Geneva section of the Alliance. But at the last moment a Spanish doctor named Sentinon passed through Geneva on his way to Bâle as delegate of the Barcelona section of the International. He was hastily received into the Alliance and given a mandate to represent it at the Congress.¹

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The Congress which assembled at Bâle on September 6th, 1869, was the fourth annual Congress of the International, and the only one attended by Bakunin. It marked the summit of the International's power and influence. It was the most representative congress yet held. A considerable German delegation made its appearance for the first time; and the schisms which were to rend the International two and three years later had not yet declared themselves. Of the seventy-five delegates, twelve at most could be regarded (and not without some qualification) as "Bakuninists". These were the two Genevese majority delegates, Heng and Brosset; Guillaume and four others from the Swiss Jura; the two Frenchmen from Lyons, Albert Richard and Palix, a tailor whom Richard had enrolled in the Alliance; Sentinon and another Spaniard; and an Italian workman from Naples named Caporosso. Bakunin influenced and dominated the Congress, not through the votes of his supporters, but by his own personality. He was active throughout, and played a leading part in every important debate. Marx, following his usual practice, did not attend the Congress.

The first item proved unexpectedly troublesome, and delayed the proceedings for the best part of three whole days. The delegates of the German Swiss sections proposed to place on the agenda the question of "direct legislation" (now commonly known as the referendum)—a constitutional novelty recently adopted by the canton of Zürich. Bakunin and the delegates of the Jura, true to their policy of root-and-branch opposition to the State, declared that "direct legislation" was a matter of *bourgeois* politics and had nothing to do with the emancipation of the working class. So much time was wasted by this discussion that the Congress was unable to exhaust the questions

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 183-9.

already inscribed on the agenda. When it became clear that this would be the case, the formal motion to add "direct legislation" to the agenda was accepted without a vote; and the Congress proceeded, on the fourth day, to its other business.

A long debate ensued on the proposal to abolish private property in land. On this Bakunin delivered one of his most fiery and characteristic speeches. He declared for the collectivisation not only of land, but of all "social wealth"; and by an easy, if not strictly relevant transition, he demanded the abolition of the State, "which is the only guarantee of existing property". There was no serious opposition. The Marxists, however, mistrustful of Bakunin's views on the State, shared his opposition to private property; and the motion was carried by an enormous majority. Four Frenchmen alone ventured to vote for the retention of private property in land; and thirteen delegates, all French or Swiss, abstained.

The question of the abolition of inheritance was more briefly debated. But it provided the sensation of the Congress. Ever since its first appearance in the programme which Bakunin submitted to the League of Peace and Freedom, the abolition of inheritance had assumed enormous importance in his mind. It had figured prominently in all his public pronouncements during the last year, and seemed at times almost to eclipse in his programme the abolition of the State. He was now invited to serve on the commission appointed by the Congress to draft its resolution on the subject; and the commission, guided by Bakunin, had no difficulty in preparing a resolution declaring "that the right of inheritance ought to be completely and radically abolished, and that this abolition is one of the indispensable conditions of the emancipation of labour".

The resolution would have been adopted by the Congress with equal facility but for one circumstance. Marx held views on the question of private property which were indistinguishable from those of Bakunin. But his mind worked in a more abstract, and perhaps more logical, way. He argued that inheritance was the effect, not the cause, of a social organisation based on private property. Its abolition naturally followed, not preceded, that of private property. Indeed to abolish inheritance alone would be tantamount to an admission that private property not acquired by inheritance was right and legitimate. If it was desired to

advocate partial measures which might be achieved even under a *bourgeois* system, it was better to concentrate on such practical reforms as a tax on inheritance or the limitation of testamentary rights than on a purely visionary ideal like the abolition of inheritance. Marx's views were embodied in a report of the General Council which was presented to the Congress by Eccarius, a German tailor resident in London, the principal spokesman of the Council.

The difference between Marx and the General Council on the one side, and Bakunin and the commission on the other, was in the last resort one of tactics rather than of principle. In certain of its aspects it differed little from the question about the hen and the egg. Had Marx come himself to Bâle, he would have rallied the waverers to his side or, if that had proved impossible, retreated to other ground rather than sustain defeat on such an issue. But in his absence the faithful Eccarius carried out Marx's instructions with true German exactitude. Bakunin defended the proposal of the commission for "complete and radical abolition"; and his tempestuous eloquence and the straightforward simplicity of his case made a powerful appeal. The shortness of the time available curtailed the debate. The closure was applied; and the proposal of the commission and the report of the General Council were successively put to the vote in an atmosphere of considerable confusion. Some delegates enthusiastically voted for both. Others took refuge in abstention. The resolution for abolition pure and simple obtained thirty-two ayes and twenty-three noes. But there were thirteen abstentions; and, since under the rules of procedure these counted as negative votes, the resolution was declared defeated. The resolution endorsing the report of the General Council was rejected by a large majority. The result was farcical. The Congress had failed to make any pronouncement at all. But the significance of the vote lay elsewhere. For the first time a congress of the International had flatly rejected a proposal laid before it with all the authority of the General Council. A figure had arisen in the International of a stature equal to that of Marx himself—a rebel who was neither overawed nor impressed by Marx's personality and was light-heartedly prepared to do battle with him on equal terms. In the last days of the Congress, Eccarius was heard to declare in tones of anguish and appre-

hension: "Marx will be extremely displeased".

One other decision of the Bâle Congress had a certain piquant interest. Among the "administrative resolutions" approved by the Congress was one conferring on the General Council powers, in the intervals between the annual congresses, to exclude recalcitrant sections and to pronounce on disputes between rival sections of the same or different national groups. Bakunin spoke strongly in favour of this proposal to extend the General Council's powers, and bitterly opposed an alternative suggestion to confer these powers on the various national federations. Far from dreading at this time the autocracy of the General Council, which was soon to become his bugbear, Bakunin saw in the Council the stern upholder of the revolutionary principles of the International against the *bourgeois* reactionary tendencies of the local groups. Not the General Council, but the Genevese watch-makers, seemed to him the enemy; and it was therefore his aim, whatever differences he might have with it on particular questions, to strengthen the authority of the General Council over the rank and file. Bakunin's ambition at this stage was to capture the General Council, not to destroy it. His denunciation of its despotism is a later development in the story.¹

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The proceedings of the Bâle Congress had brought perceptibly nearer an open breach between the two dominant personalities in the International. Bakunin's defiance of the General Council was treated by Marx as a stab in the back, which it might be prudent to ignore, but which could never be forgiven; and a further episode, which was played out before, during, and after the Congress, reawakened all Bakunin's latent suspicions of Marx. About a month before the opening of the Bâle Congress, a German Jew named Wertheim appeared in Geneva with the report that the German Social Democrat Wilhelm Liebknecht had, in the hearing of himself and others, denounced Bakunin as a Russophil and an enemy of the International, and declared that Becker had allowed himself to be duped by "this cunning Russian". Precisely what Liebknecht said, or what Wertheim said that he had said, will never be known. But in Bakunin's heated imagination, morbidly sensitive on this point, the charge

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 190-204; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 322.

sounded like a revival of the twenty-year-old slander that he was a secret agent of the Russian Government; and once more it looked as if Marx was at the bottom of it. Liebknecht was at this time Marx's principal supporter in Germany. He was, as everyone knew, more remarkable for his loyalty to his chief than for his own intelligence and initiative; and when one spoke of Liebknecht, one could not help thinking of Marx.

After a fruitless effort to obtain satisfaction through Becker, Bakunin brought his grievance with him to the Bâle Congress. There he resorted to a device much in vogue among nineteenth-century revolutionaries. It was felt to be improper and inconsistent with their principles for good revolutionaries to resort to the law courts of *bourgeois* States for the settlement of their mutual differences. Revolutionaries could accept only the verdict of their peers; and the practice therefore grew up of referring such disputes to "courts of honour", whose judgment the disputants pledged themselves to accept. Such a "court of honour" was now constituted at Bâle, at Bakunin's request, from among the delegates to the Congress, to compose the difference between him and Liebknecht, five members being chosen by each party. The task proved unexpectedly easy. Liebknecht declared at once that the allegation that he had represented Bakunin as a Russian agent rested on a pure misunderstanding. He admitted having accused Bakunin of damaging the International by the foundation of the Alliance, and of having led Becker astray by his wiles. But these charges were disposed of by the tactful intervention of Eccarius, who, in his capacity as a member both of the "court" and of the General Council of the International, observed that all controversies arising out of the foundation of the Alliance might be considered obsolete now that that body had been admitted by the General Council to the International. On the basis of these pronouncements, Bakunin received from the "court" a written judgment with which he declared himself completely satisfied. Bakunin's anger melted into thin air. There was a public reconciliation between plaintiff and defendant; and Bakunin lighted his cigarette with the verdict. This melodramatically magnanimous gesture has deprived posterity of the chance of knowing what ten more or less impartial judges really thought of this strangely evanescent quarrel.¹

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 210-13; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 179-81.

Even without the "court's" verdict, however, it is not difficult to reconstruct the main lines of the story. Whether Marx deliberately instigated Liebknecht's attack on Bakunin remains uncertain. But there is little doubt that the material for it came from his armoury. The charges of damaging the International and seducing the honest but guileless Becker are repeated again and again in Marx's letters of this period; and Liebknecht is unlikely to have derived his knowledge of Bakunin (whom he had never met) from any other source. On the other hand, at no time since 1849 had Marx believed or circulated the story that Bakunin was a Russian agent. What he did believe (though there was no longer any ground for this assertion) was that Bakunin shared Herzen's Slavophil proclivities and looked to young Russian blood to regenerate a decrepit and reactionary Europe. In this sense, perhaps, Liebknecht may have spoken of Bakunin as a Russian patriot; and careless listeners may have assumed, as Bakunin himself assumed, that Liebknecht regarded him as an agent of the Russian Government. There is some foundation for this conjecture. Liebknecht, on Bakunin's showing, not only declared that his words had been "falsely interpreted", but added, in reply to the invitation to produce proofs, that he had none "except perhaps one"; and this one was Bakunin's silence after "the defamatory articles published by Borkheim in the *Zukunft*, the principal organ of the Prussian democracy". Now the articles in question, whether "defamatory" or not, accused Bakunin not of being a Russian Government spy, but merely of being a Russophil who believed in the salvation of European democracy by Russia; and Bakunin's silence, if it proved anything, could only have proved that he had no answer to this charge. In other words, this was the charge which Liebknecht considered himself to have made; and it was only Bakunin's abnormal sensitiveness which distorted a criticism of his political activity into a slander involving his personal honour.

His sensitiveness on the subject began, now that he had reached the confines of old age, to assume the proportions of a persecution mania. It was once more in evidence in a fresh quarrel which was the direct sequel of the Liebknecht affair. At Bâle, Bakunin renewed his acquaintance with a certain Moses Hess, whom he had known in Paris more than twenty years before. Age had made them unrecognisable, and they were

reintroduced to one another by Becker. Hess was one of Liebknecht's nominees on the "court of honour", and had voted at the Congress against the abolition of inheritance; and Bakunin inferred, though incorrectly, that he was hand in glove with Marx. The impression made on Hess by Bakunin was equally unfavourable. On his return to Paris, Hess wrote in the radical paper *Le Réveil* an article on *Communists and Collectivists at the Bâle Congress*, a large part of which was devoted to an attack on Bakunin. Hess specifically declared that he cast no reflexions on Bakunin's "revolutionary honour". But he declared that as "the leader of Russian communism", Bakunin was unconsciously serving the interests of reactionary Pan-Slavism, and was secretly undermining by his "demagogic methods" the authority of the International.¹

The article infuriated Bakunin. He was even more sensitive to attacks in the French than in the German press; for in German-speaking countries he neither sought nor hoped to find disciples. He began a long and crushing reply in the form of a letter to the editors of *Le Réveil*. Like most of his writings, the letter grew under his undisciplined pen into an essay; and the essay promised to develop into a volume. Exhibiting that vein of anti-Semitism which lay deep in the traditions of every Russian aristocrat, he plunged into a general denunciation of the Jews. He made an exception in favour of certain members of the Jewish race—for Jesus Christ, St. Paul, and Spinoza in the past, for Marx and Lassalle in the present. But beside these "giants" was "a crowd of Jewish pygmies", of whom Hess was one. He charged Hess, as he had previously charged Liebknecht, with calling him a Russian spy. Hess's accusations, he wrote, "can only mean one thing, and the meaning is: Bakunin is an *agent provocateur* of the Russian Government". He diverged into autobiography and, reverting to his four years' residence in Italy, began a dissertation on Italian politics—in the midst of which the manuscript suddenly breaks off. Bakunin labelled this remarkable production *Confession of Faith of a Russian Social Democrat preceded by a Study on the German Jews*, wrote another letter to *Le Réveil*, and sent off both documents to his two friends in Paris, Aristide Rey and Alexander Herzen.²

¹ Bakunin, *Œuvres*, v. 260-61; Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 220-22.

² Bakunin, *Œuvres*, v. 239-94; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, 230-31.

Herzen now took the matter in hand. He liked neither the *Confession of Faith* nor the letter. "Why all this talk of race and of Jews?" he commented angrily to Ogarev. He went, however, to see Delescluze, the editor of *Le Réveil*. Delescluze had no intention of publishing any of Bakunin's "elucubrations". But he consented to print a letter from Herzen in defence of Bakunin, and added a note to the effect that no attack had been intended on "Bakunin's political honour". The note said no more than Hess himself had said in the article. But Bakunin, whose anger was as evanescent as it was uncontrolled, declared himself satisfied with "loyal" statement. The *affaire* Hess, like the *affaire* Liebknecht, ended as suddenly as it had begun; and the only permanent result of both was a hardening of Bakunin's resentment against Marx.

There was, however, a significant postscript which deserves quotation. Herzen, in reporting what he had done, reproached Bakunin with having attacked the pupil Hess and left Marx the master unchallenged. Bakunin's reply was a strange and characteristic mixture of sincere generosity and naïve disingenuousness.

Here is my answer about Marx. I know as well as you that Marx is quite as much to blame as the rest, and that he was the originator and instigator of all the filth that has been heaped on us. Why then have I spared him and even praised him as a great man? For two reasons, Herzen. The first is *justice*. Leaving on one side all his iniquities against us, one cannot help admitting—I, at any rate, cannot—his enormous services to the cause of socialism, which he has served ably, energetically, and faithfully throughout twenty-five years since I knew him, and in which he has undoubtedly outstripped us all. He was one of the first founders, almost the chief founder, of the International. That is in my eyes an immense service which I shall always recognise whatever he does against me.

The other reason is *political calculation* and, in my opinion, perfectly sound *tactics*. . . .

Marx is unquestionably a useful man in the International. He has been hitherto one of the strongest, ablest, and most influential supporters of socialism in it, one of the most powerful obstacles to the infiltration into it of any kind of *bourgeois* tendencies or ideas. I should never forgive myself if, from motives of personal revenge, I destroyed or diminished his undoubtedly beneficial influence. It may happen, and probably will happen, that I shall have to enter into conflict with him, not for a personal offence, but on a matter of prin-

ciple, on a question of state communism, of which he and the party led by him, English and German, are fervent supporters. Then it will be a life and death struggle. But all in good time; the moment has not yet come.

I spared and praised him for tactical reasons, out of personal calculation. How can you fail to see that all these gentlemen together are our enemies, and form a phalanx which must be disunited and split up in order the more easily to destroy it? You are more learned than I and therefore know better than I who first said: *Divide et impera*. If I now declared war on Marx, three-quarters of the International would turn against me, and I should be in a mess and lose the only ground on which I can take my stand. But if I begin the war by attacking his rabble, I shall have the majority on my side; and even Marx himself, who has in him, as you know, a big dose of malicious satisfaction at other people's troubles, will be very pleased that I have abused and told off his friends. . . .

It is not surprising that Herzen found this rambling and self-contradictory explanation little to his taste. "You will never make a Machiavelli with your *divide*", he wrote back; and he advised Bakunin to "correct his manuscript in cold blood" and "avoid insulting the Maccabees and Rothschilds". But Bakunin was incapable of reflexion or revision. He was tired of the whole business, and the fragment of the *Confession of Faith* was simply put aside. It remained among his papers, and was first published many years after his death.¹

From the confusions and contradictions of Bakunin's letter to Herzen one fact clearly emerges. He had now recognised the inevitability of a clash between him and Marx—a clash based in part on political differences, in part on personal rivalry. Marx was equally aware of approaching trouble, and confident of his power to meet it. "This Russian", he had written to Engels even before the Bâle Congress, "apparently wants to become dictator of the European workers' movement. Let him look out. Otherwise he will be officially excommunicated." But neither was in any hurry to precipitate the quarrel; and it was postponed by Bakunin's sudden retirement from the active list. On October 30th, 1869, two days after writing the letter to Herzen, he left Geneva without disclosing his destination.²

¹ Herzen, ed. Lemke, xxi. 504-6, 509; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, v. 229-30; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, 233-9.

² Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiv. 222.

The decision was not a sudden one; but its motives remained obscure to many of Bakunin's friends. In the spring of 1869 Antonia Bakunin and her child had gone on a visit to the child's father, Gambuzzi. Before long, Antonia announced to her husband that she was once more pregnant and would rejoin him in the autumn before her confinement. The past winter had set many tongues wagging over the true history of the Bakunin *ménage*, and neither Antonia nor Michael himself relished the prospect of a pregnancy and confinement at Geneva. In August, Bakunin notified to the section of the Alliance his intention to leave Geneva after the Bâle Congress, and proposed that Heng, the secretary, should succeed him as chairman. About the same time he wrote to Gambuzzi that he was "impatient to withdraw into solitude with Antonia"; and on October 3rd he announced in a letter to Guillaume his intention of wintering at Lugano, the little lake town in Italian Switzerland. "I am telling everybody", he added, "that I am going to Italy, to Barcelona or perhaps to France".¹

But if domestic circumstances were the motive for secrecy, there was another excellent reason for the migration from Geneva to Italian Switzerland. For two years Bakunin had basked in the generosity of the Princess Obolensky; and when the Princess fell on evil days, Olga Levashov had in some sort taken her place for twelve months longer. But when he quarrelled with Utin over *The People's Cause* and left Vevey for Geneva, this source also dried up. The comparative affluence which he had enjoyed for three years came to an end at the very moment when the unsolicited increase in his family was placing on him new responsibilities; and though more or less regular subsidies were received from Gambuzzi, Bakunin relapsed from this time forward into that life of penury, casual borrowings, and obscure financial expedients which he had known before his fortunate encounter with the Princess. Three times during the winter of 1868-9 he wrote to Vyrubov begging, with curious precision, for the sum of 300 francs. On the first occasion, the rather odd pretext was his desire, which he could not gratify in the absence of funds, to publish a pamphlet refuting Vyrubov's positivist opinions. Then all pretext was dropped, and Bakunin candidly pleaded that the money was "very needful" to him. When he

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 219, 261.

visited the Jura for the second time in May 1869, 30 francs had to be collected by his hosts to cover his fare and expenses. He moved into a cheaper lodging in the suburbs of Geneva. But it soon became clear that life in Geneva, however modest, was too costly for one who had no visible resources. The only course left was to instal himself at the cheapest place within reach (the cost of living in Italian Switzerland was only half that of Geneva), and to support himself by his pen. Ever optimistic, he had written to Gambuzzi of "a year of silent, studious, and lucrative retirement", of a prospective translation of a book of twenty sheets at 150 francs a sheet, and of "a well-paid and assured correspondence" for an unnamed journal. Herzen was sceptical, and curtly commented that "Michael did not intend to work". But the financial stringency was now desperate; and at such moments, Bakunin's fancy lightly turned to thoughts of literary enterprise.¹

Setting out from Geneva at the end of October 1869, he halted on the way to see his old friends the Reichels and the Vogts at Berne. On arrival at Lugano, he presented letters of introduction which Ogarev had given him to two Italians living there, Quadrio and Sperafico, both good Mazzinists. From them Bakunin learned that Lugano had become the headquarters of the Mazzinist party, and that Mazzini himself visited it frequently. The choice was natural; for it was an excellent outpost for observation and intrigue in Italy. But the same small town could not conveniently hold two personages so notorious, and now so antipathetic to each other, as Mazzini and Bakunin. The two Mazzinists gave Bakunin a kindly reception. But they soon had "a bit of an argument, quite a mild one"; and Bakunin recognised the prudence of not plunging too deeply into the "thorny question" of "liberty and socialism". It was wise to beat a retreat in time. He decided to move on to Locarno at the head of Lake Maggiore.

He took lodgings there in the house of a widow named Pedrazinni. There was a garden with a magnificent view over the lake, and the cost, including food, was only 55 francs a month. A servant could be had for another 15 francs.

¹ Vyrubov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), pp. 75, 77-8; Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 156, 219; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 228; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iii. 412; Herzen, ed. Lemke, xxi. 412.

It is simply like coming into the kingdom of heaven [he wrote to Ogarev the day after his arrival]. Just imagine, after the dry and stuffily prosaic atmosphere of Geneva, Italy in all her welcoming warmth and beauty, her primitive, pleasantly childish, simplicity.

The healthiness of the climate and the "astounding cheapness" were held out as lures to draw the immobile Ogarev from his fast anchorage in Geneva. Nor was Locarno so utterly remote. There were two posts a day "from Europe", and four from Italy. It was true that there was "no society in the *bourgeois* sense of the word". But Bakunin had already found a friend (it never took him long to do that), a gunsmith named Angelo Bettoli, who would serve as a safe address for letters. Only one thing was lacking in this earthly paradise. Tea was unprocurable; and since "a Russian cannot live without tea", Ogarev was urgently begged to send two pounds of the precious leaf.¹

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 228, 244.

CHAPTER 28

THE *AFFAIRE* NECHAEV

BUT before following Bakunin into his life of retirement at Locarno, the biographer must first retrace his steps by some months; and the story of the slowly widening rift between Bakunin and Marx must be suspended while a new character is brought upon the stage. Bakunin's energy had not been exclusively devoted, during the spring and summer of 1869, to those public or semi-public activities which have just been chronicled. A separate chapter, brief but significant, had opened in his life when, early in March 1869, there arrived at Geneva a young Russian called Sergei Nechaev.

At the age of twenty-one Nechaev had distinguished himself, even among the fiery young revolutionaries of Petersburg, by the vigour and ferocity of his opinions. His outstanding personality soon earned him both the leadership of a group of young extremists in the University of Petersburg and the attention of a vigilant police. After being haled before the authorities for an interrogation on his subversive activities, he found it prudent to disappear from Russia. But there was a streak of ingenious originality about Nechaev; and he hit upon a plan to win for himself, by the manner of his disappearance, the glory of a hero and martyr. He sent his comrades a note telling them that he had been arrested and was being conveyed to "an unknown fortress". The note purported to have been thrown by him from the window of a police van and forwarded by an anonymous student who had chanced to pick it up. There was nothing wildly improbable in the story; and his student companions had no difficulty in believing it. By the time they had organised a mass meeting to demand his release, Nechaev was well on his way south. In March 1869 he slipped across the frontier with a false passport and made his way to Switzerland, the spiritual home of the martyrs of revolution.

Nechaev was not so much a type of the Russian revolutionary of the 'sixties as a caricature of his most extreme characteristics. The generation of the 'sixties was caught in an equivocal

and intermediate position. It had shed the naïve enthusiasms of the 'forties—Herzen's romantic faith in democratic institutions and Bakunin's romantic faith in untrammelled, uncultivated human nature. It had not yet discovered the scientific basis for a revolutionary creed provided by Marx. Deprived of any positive element of belief, it took refuge in pure moral and political negation. This attitude, which appropriately came to be known as nihilism, was fundamentally different from Bakunin's romantic denial of the existing order, which was based on an unlimited faith in human nature. But the two points of view had, superficially, sufficient in common to make Bakunin rate these young revolutionaries far above his own romantic contemporary Herzen, and to make them give Bakunin the palm over any other of their revolutionary predecessors. Before Nechaev, however, none of these young men had been bold enough to press negation to its logical and ultimate conclusion. In practice, nobody had dared to reject and defy moral as well as political obligation. Nechaev took the final step. He raised revolution to the status of an absolute good; and he recognised no other kind of moral obligation. He was brave to the point of foolhardiness, and made unscrupulousness a fine art. He hoodwinked his friends with the same alacrity with which he deceived his enemies. He presented to his contemporaries, and he presents to posterity, a bewildering combination of fanatic, swashbuckler, and cad.¹

It was no mere coincidence that the first person whom Nechaev approached on his arrival in Geneva was Michael Bakunin. The veteran's revolutionary prestige attracted the ambitious young man, who hoped one day to share it, but who had nothing at present to his credit but energy, belief in himself, and a fertile imagination. Like all Bakunin's visitors, Nechaev was impressed by the gigantic form and magnetic personality of the old warrior; and he resolved to impress in turn. He explained that he had just escaped from the Peter-and-Paul fortress, where he had been imprisoned as a ringleader of the students' revolutionary movement. He had come to Switzerland as delegate of a Russian revolutionary committee which had its headquarters in Petersburg and which was laying a train of revolution throughout the country.

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iii. 418-29.

Bakunin had never before met anyone whose talent for make-believe surpassed his own. Above all, he had never met anyone who possessed his own singular taste for inventing political societies of which he was the commander-in-chief, and of which the rank and file scarcely existed outside his own imagination. But by a fortunate, though illogical, dispensation of providence those who delight to hoodwink others are themselves, as a rule, most easily hoodwinked. Scepticism had no place in Bakunin's temperament; and he believed implicitly everything Nechaev told him. The young man shared Bakunin's own gift of compelling the admiration and confidence of new acquaintances; and Bakunin was infatuated at first sight, as others had so often been infatuated with him. He began to call young Nechaev by the tender nickname of "Boy" (for Bakunin had retained a few words of English from his year's stay in London). The most affectionate relations were established. A queer story afterwards circulated among the Russian *émigrés* in Switzerland that Bakunin had given Nechaev a paper promising his implicit obedience "even to the point of forging bank-notes", and had signed it, in token of complete submission, with a woman's name, "Matrena". This declaration is alleged to have been found among Nechaev's papers after his arrest. But the story is too lightly attested to warrant credence. If any document bearing such a signature existed, "Matrena" was probably an example of Bakunin's predilection for the childish mystification of code names, and was not invested with the significance which rumour attached to it.

The circulation of the story, true or false, is a sufficient indication of Nechaev's ascendancy over the old revolutionary. The infatuation must be explained in part by Bakunin's circumstances. He had long lost touch with Russia itself. The rift with Herzen, the quarrel with his newer friends in Vevey, and the break-up of the International Brotherhood had deprived him of all serious contact even with his compatriots abroad; for of those who still associated with him, Zhukovsky was an amiable nonentity, and Ogarev was rapidly drinking himself into insensibility. The arrival of Nechaev brought him, for the first time in many years, a breath of his native land. He would never see it again. But still, in the midst of his international preoccupations, it often haunted his dreams; and here was a chance of

working for the cause of revolution in the country which was nearest to his heart. No other land could appeal to him in this way. The sentimental side of his nature, which seemed to have died with his memories of home and childhood long years ago, revived and reopened for this dangerous and seductive Russian "Boy".

Bakunin naturally expressed his eagerness to share the labours and the laurels of Nechaev's Russian revolutionary committee; and he had something to offer in return. Whether the declaration signed "Matrena" ever existed or not, there is no doubt about the authenticity of another document presented by Bakunin to Nechaev which is in itself sufficiently remarkable. It is dated May 12th, 1869, and runs as follows:

The bearer of this is one of the accredited representatives of the Russian section of the World Revolutionary Alliance. No. 2771.

It is signed Michael Bakunin, and the seal affixed to it bears the words "European Revolutionary Alliance: Central Committee". It is odd, though characteristic, that Bakunin made no effort to introduce his new protégé to his associates in the Social-Democratic Alliance, or even to that secret inner ring of the Alliance of which he spoke to Guillaume and to Perron. He did not, so far as we know, even tell Nechaev of its existence. He could not resist the temptation of inventing, on the spur of the moment, an entirely new World or European Revolutionary Alliance which had never been heard of before and was never heard of again; and he gave the certificate a number which implied, for those who chose to be impressed, that this unheard-of organisation had at least 2770 other agents performing its behests in various corners of Europe. Thus did Nechaev, the self-styled representative of a probably non-existent Russian revolutionary committee, receive from Bakunin authority to act in Russia as the representative of a non-existent European Revolutionary Alliance. It was a delicious situation which can have few parallels either in comedy or in history. The interesting point, on which evidence fails us, is whether both were equally deceived.¹

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 147; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 343; Ralli, *Minuvshie Gody* (October 1908), pp. 158-9; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iii. 430-40.

Having thus, by a stroke of the pen, established their respective organisations, Bakunin and Nechaev set to work to provide them with a literature. Between April and August 1869, seven Russian pamphlets were issued by them in Geneva. One, headed *Some Words to Our Young Brothers in Russia*, bears Bakunin's signature. Another, addressed *To the Students of the University, of the Academy, and of the Technological Institute* and claiming Moscow as its place of origin (an arrant bluff), was signed by Nechaev. *Publications of the Society "The People's Justice" No. 1, Summer 1869*, also purporting to emanate from Moscow, contained two articles signed "The Russian Revolutionary Committee". A fourth, beginning with the apostrophe "Honourable Russian Nobility!" was signed "Descendants of Rurik and the Party of the Independent Nobility". The remaining three—one addressed to "Russian Students", and two entitled *How the Revolutionary Question presents Itself* and *Principles of Revolution*—had no signature at all. Besides these published pamphlets, Nechaev subsequently had in his possession a cyphered *Revolutionary Catechism*, setting forth the rules of a revolutionary secret society and the duties of its members, which appears to have been composed at this time. Bakunin's responsibility for the pamphlet bearing his name is not in question; and the pamphlet addressed to "Russian Students", the shortest and mildest of the series, is known to have been written by Ogarev. The authorship of the remainder of these documents is one of the most disputed problems in the whole literature relating to Bakunin.¹

The amoral principles of Nechaev found a clear and unequivocal expression in these writings, the most extreme in this respect being the pamphlets *How the Revolutionary Question presents Itself* and *Principles of Revolution*, and the *Revolutionary Catechism*. *How the Revolutionary Question presents Itself*, after explaining that the "traditional protest" of the Russian peasant against Government oppression is to flee into the forests and turn brigand, proceeds to a long panegyric of brigandage:

Brigandage is one of the most honoured forms of Russian national life. . . . The brigand in Russia is the true and only revolutionary—the revolutionary without phrase-making, without bookish rhetoric, the

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, 461-74, 477-88; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xxi. 365.

irreconcilable, unwearying, untamable revolutionary in deed. . . . He who wants to make a serious conspiracy in Russia, who wants a popular revolution, must go into that world. . . . The season is at hand. . . . The anniversaries of Stenka Razin and Pugachev are approaching. It is time to celebrate these warriors of the people. Let all prepare for the feast.

Principles of Revolution is still more ruthless:

We recognise no other activity but the work of extermination, but we admit that the forms in which this activity will show itself will be extremely varied—poison, the knife, the rope, etc. In this struggle revolution sanctifies everything alike.

The revolutionary, in the words of the *Revolutionary Catechism*, despises and hates present-day social morality in all its forms and motives. He regards everything as moral which helps the triumph of revolution. . . . All soft and enervating feelings of relationship, friendship, love, gratitude, even honour, must be stifled in him by a cold passion for the revolutionary cause. . . . Day and night he must have one thought, one aim—merciless destruction.

Within a few months of the appearance of these documents, the Marxists began their campaign to compromise Bakunin by attributing the authorship of them to him. The Bakuninists considered it necessary to exonerate their chief by denying or minimising his share in them; and the argument has been prolonged into recent times. Historically, the verdict must be given to the Marxists. Bakunin's infatuation for Nechaev was at this time almost unbounded; and he recklessly adopted Nechaev's ideas. It is highly improbable that Bakunin, himself an accomplished pamphleteer, would have left the literary presentation of these ideas to an untried student. Internal evidence is, moreover, conclusive. The anonymous pamphlets are full of Bakunin's tricks of style and characteristic turns of phrase ("a revolutionary without phrase-making", "the season is at hand", etc.). The *Revolutionary Catechism* is a typical specimen of one of Bakunin's favourite forms of composition. Even the pamphlet signed with Nechaev's name bears marks of Bakunin's hand. For it quotes in the original German the favourite Hegelian catchword of Bakunin's youth, "That which is rational is real, that which is real is rational"; and it is more

than dubious whether Nechaev had studied Hegel or understood German.¹

It has been mentioned that one of the Nechaev pamphlets was the work of Ogarev. Ogarev, now that Herzen's guiding spirit was removed, had become a more and more pliant tool in Bakunin's hand; and Bakunin for a moment even nursed once more the ancient hope of reconstituting the "revolutionary triumvirate" and of publishing the appeal to Russian students over the joint signatures of Herzen, Ogarev and himself. Herzen hastened to dispel this ambition. He described Ogarev's pamphlet as a "journalistic diatribe" which, far from meriting three signatures, was not worth a single one. When he came to Geneva in May 1869, he took an instinctive dislike to Nechaev, though he treated Bakunin with good-natured tolerance. The pamphlets would do "fearful harm". But Bakunin in his bloodthirsty appeals for universal extermination was "like old nurses and priests of every age, crying wolf when he knows quite well that the wolf will not come". Herzen spent five or six weeks in Geneva (it was his last meeting with Bakunin); and he went away ironically reflecting that his brain must be growing old, since it refused to understand much that seemed perfectly clear to his former friend and comrade.²

But Bakunin and Nechaev wanted from Herzen and Ogarev something more solid than literary collaboration or the moral asset of their names. Money was desperately needed for the new enterprise; and Bakunin had discovered an unexpected and promising source of supply. In 1858 a rich and eccentric Russian landowner named Bakhmetiev was converted to communism and, with the consistent fanaticism of the Russian idealist, went off to found a model community on an island somewhere in the Pacific. On his way he visited Herzen and Ogarev in London, and finding that he had more money about him than seemed necessary for the realisation of his project, he left with them the sum of £800 for revolutionary propaganda in Russia. Having performed this charitable act, Bakhmetiev vanished into the Pacific and was heard of no more; and his existence might have seemed a fairy-tale but for the entry, in the books of a London bank, of a credit of £800 standing in the joint names of Herzen

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 472-4, 482, 494.

² *Herzen*, ed. Lemko, xxi. 365, 377-8, 403, 443.

and Ogarev. These two, with their habitual scrupulousness and caution, had been content to use the interest on this sum for the purpose of their propaganda; and in 1869 the capital of the "Bakhmetiev fund" was still intact. What could be more appropriate, asked Bakunin, than to spend this fund, of whose existence he had probably learned from Ogarev, on the revolutionary enterprise sponsored by "Boy" and himself? Ogarev, who had no longer any will of his own, was easily won over, and he continued, at Bakunin's instance, to pester Herzen with letters in support of the proposal. Herzen resisted for some time. His lifelong scepticism, his prejudices against Nechaev, and his distrust of Bakunin were as strong as ever. But he was a sick and weary man, and cared too little any longer to withstand Ogarev's importunities. At the end of July 1869, he agreed that the fund should be divided, and that Ogarev should dispose as he pleased of half the sum. He pleaded none the less that the money would be better spent in maintaining the printing press in Geneva, and added tartly that such an enterprise might even provide Bakunin with a securer livelihood than Nechaev's Russian adventure. The appeal was unheeded. The sum of 10,000 francs (£400) passed into the hands of Bakunin, and thence, presumably somewhat diminished, into those of Nechaev.¹

After this crowning triumph, Nechaev saw no need to tarry in Switzerland. His visit had, thanks to Bakunin, succeeded beyond all reasonable expectation. He had obtained a mandate signed by the famous revolutionary in the name of a European Revolutionary Alliance, which (whatever his personal opinion of its value) would serve to impress his student coadjutors in Russia; and now he had secured, for his untrammelled personal use, a substantial sum in ready cash. Possessed of these valuable accessories, and armed with bundles of pamphlets and proclamations, he returned to Russia at the end of August. The winter was to be spent in organisation; and he assured Bakunin that the revolution would begin without fail on February 19th, 1870, the ninth anniversary of the liberation of the serfs.

It says little for the skill or vigilance of the Russian police that Nechaev, with this record and with these intentions, was able to enter Russia, to spend three months there, to commit

¹ *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xiv. 411-21; xxi. 408-9.

a notorious crime, and to return in no particular haste, unscathed and unmolested, to Switzerland. But this is what happened. Nechaev set up his headquarters at Moscow. His organisation, which seems to have called itself alternatively "The People's Justice" and "The Society of the Axe", was constructed on the lines prescribed in the *Revolutionary Catechism* and followed in almost every secret society in Europe since the 'forties. It was based, or purported to be based, on groups of five, each member of the group owing implicit obedience to a chief who, in turn, took his orders from a central committee. The elaborate investigations subsequently made by the police failed to discover any concrete plan of revolution prepared by this remarkable organisation. The central committee appears to have consisted of Nechaev alone, and the number of groups actually constituted is quite unknown. The whole affair is enveloped in that strange atmosphere of bluff and make-believe which surrounds all the revolutionary activities of Bakunin and Nechaev. But one achievement of the new organisation was concrete enough. In November 1869 a student named Ivanov, who belonged to one of the groups of five, and who was, rightly or wrongly, suspected of an inclination to turn informer, was murdered by Nechaev with the connivance of the other members of his group. His body was discovered in a pond. The details of the crime quickly became known and created enormous sensation. Nechaev perceived that he could no longer count on the lethargy of the police, and made preparations for flight. He left Russia about the middle of December; and at the beginning of January 1870 he reappeared in Switzerland.¹

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Bakunin had now been established for more than two months at Locarno. Of the projects which were to render his retirement "lucrative" as well as "studious", only one had materialised. A Russian named Lyubavin, who met him in Geneva and took pity on his financial straits, procured for him an order to translate Karl Marx's *Capital* into Russian for a Petersburg publisher. The fee was 1200 roubles, of which 300 roubles were paid immediately in advance. The 300 roubles sufficed to pay Bakunin's most pressing debts in Geneva and to transport him to Locarno,

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iii. 487-95; Kantor, *V Pogone*, p. 8.

where he began in due course to wrestle with Marx's laboured periods. Neither the subject of *Capital* nor the dull routine of translation was calculated to appeal to him, and the task proceeded haltingly. At first, he wrote to Ogarev in December, he could not manage more than three pages a day (there were 784 of them in all), but now he had struggled up to five a day, and eventually hoped to reach ten. He wondered whether Ada Zhukovsky in Geneva could help by making a fair copy of what he had written. During December two modest instalments were despatched to Lyubavin. But not enough had been done by the end of the year to work off the advance he had received or entitle him to a further payment.¹

By this time he was in the throes of another crisis. In the middle of December Antonia, now eight months gone with child, came from Naples to join him. The journey by sea to Genoa was slow and exhausting; and Bakunin, who went to meet her at Arona, waited there for two days in a state of "fearful anxiety". He was now penniless. Gambuzzi, angered at Antonia's decision to rejoin her husband, was unapproachable. Bakunin turned to the only source still open to him, and begged Ogarev to ask Herzen to lend, "not from his own pocket, but from the fund", 300 francs at once and 500 francs in the next three months. Herzen, with more than wonted alacrity, sent the 300 francs—not of course, from "the fund"; and Bakunin's last letter to Herzen was written in the first days of January 1870 to thank him for this benefaction. Three weeks later Herzen died in Paris.²

Bakunin had received no tidings of Nechaev while the latter was in Russia. But in December strange rumours began to reach the Russian colony in Switzerland. Some said that Nechaev was in flight, others that he had been arrested. The certain news of the arrest in Russia of many of his associates added to Bakunin's anxiety, and for several days he lived between hope and fear. Then on January 12th, 1870, came a letter from Ogarev to announce that "Boy" had arrived in Geneva. Bakunin "jumped for joy so that he nearly broke his head on the ceiling". Lack of money and Antonia's imminent confinement prevented him

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 247, 249; Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 324-6.

² *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 246-7, 252; Herzen, ed. Lemke, xxi. 539.

from going at once to Geneva. But he wrote to beg instantly that Nechaev would visit him in Locarno. There he would find "a blanket, a bed, board and lodging, and above all the profoundest secrecy"; for here everyone was devoted to Bakunin, and there were no scandalmongers and gossips. Two days after the receipt of the joyful news and the despatch of his letter, Antonia gave birth to a daughter.¹

Nechaev came to Locarno towards the end of January. The need for concealment was urgent. For the Russian Government, once they discovered his whereabouts, would certainly demand his extradition as a common criminal; and the Swiss Government might refuse the right of asylum. Bakunin remembered that the Swiss authorities had, only a few months before, at the request of the Russian police, seized the Princess Obolensky's children and handed them over to her husband; and he trembled for the fate of his darling "Boy". How much Nechaev told Bakunin of his adventures in Russia, and what Bakunin believed, are points which remain obscure. But Nechaev wrote a letter, which was published in *Progrès* (Guillaume thought he recognised Bakunin's hand in the drafting), as well as in French, German, and Belgian journals, describing how he had been betrayed to the police through the carelessness of a comrade; how he had been carried off to the Siberian mines; how secret orders had been given to murder him on the way; and how he was rescued in the nick of time by vigilant friends. In a letter to Richard at Lyons, Bakunin repeated (whether he believed it or not) the same story. Elsewhere he went further. In an article which, by a disconcerting coincidence, was published in the same issue of *Progrès* as Nechaev's letter, he threw out the supposition that this Nechaev, about whom the Russian Government and press were making so much fuss, was a mythical personage; and, more bewildering still, he repeated this conjecture in letters to his friends Richard and Adolf Vogt in Berne. By yet another extension of this system of false scents, he prefaced a harmless obituary of Herzen written for a Marseilles paper with a reference to his own recent return from "a distant journey in countries where newspapers penetrate with difficulty"—an allusion evidently designed to convey to knowing readers the impression

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 248-9, 251, 253, 255; Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 260.

that he himself was just back from a secret visit to Russia. It is useless to seek a rational motive for these accumulated mystifications. Bakunin's passion for make-believe was not bounded by the limits of adult common sense.¹

Nechaev's brief visit to Locarno had, however, remarkable results of a more concrete nature. The first was the abrupt termination of Bakunin's attempt to translate *Capital*. Inspired by Nechaev, he had no difficulty in convincing himself that this monotonous hack-work was unworthy of a genius which should be employed in the more direct promotion of revolution. The 300 roubles spent, but not yet earned, seemed at first to constitute an obstacle. But Nechaev undertook to dispose of that aspect of the matter. The method adopted by Nechaev was simplicity itself. He waited till he was back in Geneva, and from there, at the end of February, he wrote a peremptory letter to Lyubavin summoning him, in the name of the central committee of the People's Justice, to leave Bakunin in peace and threatening him with the unpleasant consequences which would ensue in the event of non-compliance with this order. This letter, as will be seen in the sequel, was afterwards used by Marx to discredit his rival. It was, indeed, a light-hearted proceeding on Bakunin's part to leave to Nechaev's rough hand the delicate operation of extricating him from a distasteful obligation; and he was, judged by ordinary standards, thoroughly unscrupulous in his financial dealings. But the letter was sent from Geneva some time after Nechaev's visit to Locarno, and there is no proof that Bakunin was responsible for its composition or aware of its contents.²

Now that Bakunin was quit of his uncongenial task, it was urgently necessary to replace from some other source the 900 roubles which its completion would have brought him. But here too Nechaev, or Nechaev and Bakunin in counsel, were ready with an expedient. The death of Herzen had made available the balance of the Bakhmetiev fund; and Ogarev, as the surviving trustee, was presumably entitled to dispose of it. The idea was too opportune for its execution to be delayed for a moment.

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 280; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed Dragomanov, p. 257. *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 258; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, ii. 519; *Herzen*, ed. Lemke, xxi. 564.

² Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iii. 496-7.

Bakunin urgently begged Ogarev to claim it from the executors of Herzen's estate.

This is not only your right [he wrote eagerly] it is your sacred duty; and to this sacred duty all feelings of personal delicacy must give way. In this affair you must act with Roman sternness, you must be a Brutus.

Bakunin did not content himself with letters. On reflexion, the issue seemed too vital. He borrowed 80 francs from the son of his landlady to pay his fare, and in the middle of March 1870 came up to Geneva to be on the scene of action.

Roman sternness proved superfluous. Ogarev wrote to young Alexander Herzen, who, with the alacrity of one anxious to wash his hands of a tiresome subject, recognised the obligation and came to Geneva in person to pay over the money. The occasion was formal. There were present—besides young Herzen and Ogarev—Bakunin, Nechaev, Natalie Ogarev, Herzen's elder daughter Natalie, and two or three other Russians. The sum of 10,000 francs, representing the second moiety of the fund, was handed by young Herzen to Ogarev (who gave him a receipt), by Ogarev to Bakunin, and by Bakunin to Nechaev, Nechaev gave no receipt, leaving his friends to rely on his "revolutionary honour"; and when, a few weeks later, Ogarev asked for one, he curtly replied that it was not the habit of his committee to give receipts.¹

The Bakhmetiev fund was not the only nest-egg on which Bakunin and Nechaev, during their conference at Locarno, had cast covetous eyes; for the financial needs of the revolution were a bottomless abyss. The next episode in this unedifying story centres round the person and the possessions of Herzen's daughter. Like her brother, Natalie Herzen had been left with a comfortable little fortune. Unlike him, she had also inherited from her father a sincere though ill-defined enthusiasm for revolution. It occurred to Bakunin and Nechaev that both her enthusiasm and her fortune might suitably be pressed into service of the revolutionary cause. Alexander Herzen and the other members of the family not unnaturally protested, and sought to remove Natalie from the temptations of Geneva. But Bakunin had no more scruples about Natalie Herzen's fortune than about the

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 263, 535-6.

Bakhmetiev fund. He appealed to Ogarev with his usual impassioned vehemence to keep Natalie in Geneva, and denounced he "unconscious but instinctive egoism" of the members of her family who wished to remove her from these revolutionary temptations. Arriving at Geneva, hot-foot in pursuit of the Bakhmetiev fund, in the middle of March, Bakunin for the first time introduced Natalie Herzen to Nechaev. The impression was evidently considerable. Nechaev counted on his personal magnetism to achieve the object of his ambition, and Bakunin and Ogarev, the former active and insistent, the latter passive and compliant, both lent themselves to this disagreeable game. "A young and pretty woman can always be useful", remarked Bakunin when Natalie asked how she could serve the cause; and he went on to suggest that there were rich men, young and old, whose heads might be turned in the interests of the revolution. Three months later, when he had broken with Nechaev, Bakunin wrote of him in terms of unusual candour:

If you introduce him to your friend, his first aim will be to sow dissension, scandal, and intrigue between you and make you quarrel. If your friend has a wife or daughter, he will do his best to seduce her and get her with child, in order to snatch her from the power of conventional morality and involve her, despite herself, in a revolutionary protest against society.

The indictment comes oddly from so stout a protestant against the existing social order; and it comes more oddly still from one who had so lately done his utmost to convert the daughter of an old friend into Nechaev's tool. It is difficult in this matter to draw an effective distinction between Nechaev's moral unscrupulousness and Bakunin's moral irresponsibility.

Nechaev's design was, however, not crowned with success. Among the hare-brained schemes which he and Bakunin had hatched at Locarno was one for the revival of *The Bell*; and for this purpose Natalie Herzen's name (since her brother's was unobtainable) would be an important asset. But Nechaev lacked experience in dealing with young ladies who had received a sheltered education and imbibed conventional notions of morals and behaviour. The girl, at first dazzled and fascinated, became frightened; and she refused to allow her name to appear on the new publication. There is a record, which sounds authentic, of a queer scene in which Nechaev and Bakunin demanded a promise

of her unconditional and unquestioning obedience to the behests of the "Revolutionary Committee". When Natalie demurred, Nechaev flew into a temper and raged at her as a "bread-and-butter miss", while Bakunin tried to quiet him with "Steady, steady, young tiger!" But if there were difficulties with Natalie, and open war with the other members of the Herzen family, Ogarev was still a pliant tool. On April 2nd Nechaev was able to realise one of his ambitions by issuing the first number of a new series of *The Bell*. On the front page was a manifesto signed by Ogarev "handing over" *The Bell* to its "new management" and promising lifelong collaboration. But *The Bell* in its new form proved to be a disappointing and colourless production, and collapsed ignominiously after the appearance of six weekly numbers. Its brief career was presumably financed from the Bakhmetiev fund.¹

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With the short-lived resurrection of *The Bell* Nechaev had reached the summit of his prestige and success. There was no event to mark the beginning of the decline; but from this point, for some intangible reason, everything began to go badly for him. A Russian revolutionary named Lopatin, one of his associates in Russia, arrived in Geneva. He was the only man who had seen Nechaev at work both in Russia and in Switzerland; and he made the most of his knowledge. He told, for the first time, the true story of the murder of Ivanov. He averred that Nechaev's boasted escapes from the Peter-and-Paul fortress and from the gendarmes on the way to Siberia were audacious fabrications, and that the Russian Revolutionary Committee and its vast organisation had no existence outside Nechaev's creative brain. Not everybody believed Lopatin. But the doubts were damaging to Nechaev's credit. Russian diplomacy and the Swiss police redoubled their efforts. In May 1870 a young Russian *émigré* named Serebrennikov was mistaken by the police for Nechaev, and kept under arrest for some days until his identity could be established. Nechaev himself remained concealed in Geneva or in the surrounding country, moving on rapidly from place to place and never leaving an address. Once Natalie

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 262-4, 268, 288; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iii. 507; Rodichev, *Posledniya Novosti*, February 13th, 1931.

Ogarev and Natalie Herzen had him in hiding for a week in their house. But the spell was broken, and they now made no secret of their impatience to be rid of an embarrassing guest.¹

Nechaev's Swiss adventure ended at length in a violent quarrel with Bakunin. In this obscure and complicated *dénouement* financial, psychological, political, and even moral considerations played their part. None of the otherwise abundant sources for the Nechaev episode gives a coherent account of the rupture. But it is still possible to unravel the most important strands.

Bakunin's position throughout life had been such that he could not afford to engage in any revolutionary enterprise which did not provide him with his daily bread. On the present occasion, he had himself done so much to put Nechaev in funds that he was entitled to assume that his own modest requirements would not be overlooked. There is no record that the point was discussed when Nechaev was at Locarno. But a month later, Bakunin wrote to Ogarev that he had "overcome false shame" and presented to Nechaev "the conditions on which he could give himself up entirely to the cause". He even named his terms in plain figures: 150 francs a month if he remained in Locarno, 250 francs a month if he were required to come to Geneva. But Nechaev was no longer the friendless exile who had appeared in Switzerland a year ago. He had climbed on Bakunin's shoulders to a position of some eminence in revolutionary circles and, thanks to the Bakhmetiev fund, of material independence. He no longer needed Bakunin. He had fathomed the veteran's vanity and helplessness, and judged that he had nothing more to hope or fear from him. It was certainly not worth while to pay for support which, for what it was worth, could be had without payment; and gratitude was a quality not recognised by Nechaev. He quietly ignored Bakunin's claims and requests. The old man's pride was made to pay dearly for his infatuation. He was himself by nature sufficiently imperious, and was seldom overburdened with scruples. But he had met more than his match in this imperious and unscrupulous "Boy".

The revival of *The Bell* provided another humiliating proof how little Nechaev now cared for his former patron. Bakunin had assumed that he, or he and Ogarev, the survivors of the once

¹ *Arkhiv Ogarevych*, ed. Gershenson, pp. 275-7.

dreamed-of "revolutionary triumvirate", would be the principal editors of the paper. Nechaev, having secured Ogarev's endorsement of the venture, now brushed Bakunin contemptuously aside. He would choose his own collaborators; and when, on the appearance of the first number, Bakunin wrote to criticise the vagueness and ambiguity of its programme, the letter was published with an editorial note remarking that "only men of petty self-esteem . . . can hold aloof from active work on the pretext of disagreement on this or that point of detail". Bakunin once more pocketed his pride and occupied himself in writing a pamphlet under the title *The Bears of Berne and the Bear of Petersburg*. The "Bears of Berne" were the Swiss federal authorities who had forcibly abducted the children of Princess Obolensky, and the "Bear of St. Petersburg" was, of course, Alexander II, at whose behest the crime had been committed. The motive (since Bakunin had lost all interest in the Princess herself) was to prevent the repetition of the crime on the person of Nechaev.

In May, however, Bakunin could bear his humiliation no longer. He came up for a few days to Geneva and presented Nechaev with what he himself calls an "ultimatum". His own financial needs were doubtless the principal item. But it would seem that he also demanded that *The Bell*, which had just ended its six weeks' career, should be restarted under the control of Ogarev and himself. Nechaev, whose own position was now sufficiently parlous, temporised. He was not accustomed to have a pistol held at his head; and the old man could wait for an answer. Bakunin was still waiting on June 14th, when he wrote pathetically to Ogarev from Locarno that a breach with "Boy" seemed "inevitable". He was overwhelmed with debts and had not a penny to live on; and "owing to the unfortunate affair with Lyubavin" he could get no more translations. But a few days later Nechaev, still not committing himself, wrote to fix a rendezvous; and Bakunin once more obediently made the journey to Geneva.¹

He remained there for three or four weeks; and during this time the final rupture occurred. Nechaev was in an ugly mood.

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 261, 281-2; *Kolokol* (April-May 1870: reissued in facsimile, Moscow, 1933), pp. 4-5; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, ii. 13-67; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iii. 534.

He had squeezed Ogarev dry. *The Bell* was dead; and he was tired of the rôle of a hunted animal driven from place to place by the pursuit of the Swiss police. He decided to transfer his activities from Switzerland to London. Bakunin's statements are the sole source for what followed. In preparation for his flight, Nechaev stole a number of letters and papers belonging to Bakunin, to Ogarev, to Natalie Herzen, and to others of his associates in case he should some day need the means of blackmailing their owners. When detected at this agreeable game, he coolly replied: "Yes, that is our system. We regard as enemies, and are obliged to deceive and compromise, all those who are not *entirely* with us". Detection did not prevent him from carrying away with him to London a trunk-load of potentially compromising documents. Bakunin spent the days following Nechaev's departure in writing letters of denunciation and warning to friends in different countries to whom he had previously commended "Boy" as the apple of his eye. He borrowed from Ogarev "for three weeks" 450 francs, which had somehow remained over from the Bakhmetiev fund; and by the end of July 1870 he was back in Locarno.¹

The flight of Nechaev brought to an end this chequered episode in Bakunin's career, and Bakunin was enabled to ring down the curtain in an appropriate outburst of moral indignation. Before many days were past he had convinced himself, and was boasting to his friends, that he had "destroyed" Nechaev in order to prevent him from bringing shame on the revolutionary cause. This high-sounding explanation would carry more weight if Bakunin could be shown to have exhibited any moral distaste for the young man's methods before a rupture had been rendered inevitable by other factors, and before Nechaev had employed those methods against Bakunin himself. But long acquiescence made this belated indignation unconvincing and rather ridiculous. Bakunin was indeed a very different person from Nechaev. Unlike Nechaev, he had a large fund of generosity and kindness towards his fellow-men. Unlike Nechaev, he was ruthless only in speech. Above all, he had a phenomenal share of that human inconsistency which permits a man to preach in all sincerity what he is himself quite incapable of performing. But few contemporaries possessed the

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 284-90.

key to Bakunin's complex and bewildering character; and it was not difficult to find in his writings—both before, during and after the period of his infatuation for Nechaev—naïve appeals to that “Machiavellianism” and “Jesuitry” which he so bitterly denounced in his discarded idol. Marx and his followers had an easy task when they sought to identify Bakunin with Nechaev's amoral creed.

Superficially, the most important consequence of the Nechaev episode in Bakunin's career was the use which his enemies were able to make of it. But independently of this tangible result, it left an indelible scar on Bakunin's soul. It was the first time for twenty years that he had abandoned himself so unreservedly to anyone, or expended so much emotion on one of his fellow-creatures. It was only to Ogarev that he could pour out his heart and confess the bitterness of the betrayal.

There is nothing to be said [he wrote after his return to Locarno]. We were fools, and how Herzen would have had the laugh of us if he had been alive, and how right he would have been to scold us. Well, there is nothing to be done. Let us swallow the bitter pill, and we shall be wiser in future.

Bakunin wasted no time in idle regrets. Undaunted and unabashed, he continued to spin the tenuous and complicated web of political intrigue which he was spreading over half Europe. But about this time a certain lassitude—a suggestion, not of doubt as to the infallibility of his programme, but of indifference to the attitude of the world outside—begins to creep into his life. In so far as this note of resignation can be attributed to any cause other than the passage of time (Bakunin was now fifty-six, and ten years older than his age) it appears to date from the humiliation of the Nechaev fiasco.¹

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 299, 303, 341.

CHAPTER 29

FIASCO AT LYONS

THE outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war on July 16th, 1870, almost exactly coincided with Nechaev's flight from Switzerland; and for more than a fortnight Bakunin was so much absorbed in the humiliation and disgrace of the rupture with "Boy" that he scarcely noticed the more important conflict. He could not, however, long remain blind to the revolutionary potentialities of the struggle. On August 11th he wrote to Ogarev from Locarno that "events had thrown him into a regular fever", and that during the last three days he had written twenty-three letters. But even now his mood was sufficiently detached. He hailed with satisfaction "the rout of French braggadocio by Prussian scientific brutality", and was delighted that Caliban (Bismarck) was giving Robert Macaire (Napoleon) "a sound hiding". He thought that "another great Prussian victory under the walls of Metz" would settle the fate of Napoleon and "Madame Eugénie"; and thereafter he would wish "every possible disaster to the Pomeranian heroes". In any case it would be a "splendid opportunity" to bring to fruition his revolutionary designs.

In the letter to Ogarev of August 11th, Bakunin declared that he "had a plan already worked out". He entertained serious hopes of Italy. He assured Richard, apparently without any foundation, that firing had already begun in Milan and barricades were being erected there. Encouraging reports reached him from Gambuzzi and Fanelli in Naples; and towards the end of August, Fanelli came himself to Locarno. But by this time the military situation had quenched Bakunin's light-hearted satisfaction at successive Prussian victories. His innate devotion to France and hatred of the Teuton asserted themselves. He became a sturdy French patriot denouncing the treachery of the Government and demanding its overthrow from the purest national motives:

Remember Danton's words [he wrote to Richard] at a time and in the midst of dangers certainly not more terrible than the present dangers and the present time: "Before marching against the enemy in front, it is necessary to destroy and paralyse the enemy in the rear". Overthrow *the Prussians within* in order to be able to march in confidence and security against the Prussians without.

He began, for eventual publication, a long *Letter to a Frenchman* (the supposed addressee being Gaspard Blanc, an associate of Richard) in which he declared that, the French regular army having proved worthless, the one thing which could save France was "an elemental, mighty, passionately energetic, anarchistic, destructive, unrestrained uprising of the popular masses over the whole territory of France".¹

As disaster followed disaster, Bakunin grew more and more impatient of the lake-side tranquillity of Locarno. If he were young, he wrote regretfully to Richard, he would not be content to write letters. He could be among them in person. At length on September 4th the news of Sedan reached Locarno. Bakunin cannot yet have heard of the proclamation of the republic which took place in Paris on that very day; but the capture of Napoleon and of the last French army in the field made that event a foregone conclusion. Bakunin's eyes were no longer fixed on Paris. The whole State machine had been smashed; and on its ruins would rise, not a new centralised State, but his cherished ideal—the free federation of communes. The initiative rested with Lyons and Marseilles, the only French towns where, as luck would have it, he had a faithful though exiguous band of followers. "If the workers of Lyons and Marseilles do not rise at once," he wrote to Richard on this fateful day, "France and European socialism are finished." He was at their disposal. Two days later the decision had been taken.

My socialist revolutionary friends at Lyons [he wrote to Adolf Vogt] are calling me to Lyons. I have made up my mind to move my old bones there and to play what will probably be my last rôle. But as usual I have not a *sou*. Can you, I will not say lend, but give, me 500 or 400 or 300 or 200 or even 100 francs for my journey. If you can, you will give me them; if you cannot, you naturally will not.

The answer was presumably in some degree favourable; for on

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 300; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 22-3; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 271-2, 276; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, ii. 81-134.

September 9th Bakunin set out from Locarno to Berne, *en route* for Neuchâtel, Geneva, and Lyons. But at Lucerne, as he alighted from the stage-coach (the Gotthard had not yet been pierced, and there was no railway to Italian Switzerland), he had an unexpected encounter the nature of which can only be explained by a digression.¹

When Nechaev escaped from Russia at the end of 1869, the famous Third Division instructed the most efficient of its secret agents in Switzerland to discover his whereabouts. The name of the agent was Karl Arved Roman. He had been living for some time in Geneva under the name of Postnikov, a retired Russian colonel of revolutionary sympathies; and in this guise he succeeded, without much difficulty, in establishing himself in the good graces of the kindly and confiding Ogarev. He had never met Michael Bakunin. But gossip was rife in Geneva; and out of it Roman-Postnikov was able to construct the following report to his employers:

Bakunin has not long to live. He is in an advanced state of dropsy, and it has gone to his brain. He has become, they say, like a wild beast in consequence (on the top of everything else) of his ungovernable temper and his inability to satisfy his sexual passions.²

Neither Ogarev nor anyone else in Geneva could throw much light on the whereabouts of Nechaev; for that sagacious young man moved rapidly from place to place and never divulged his address to his best friends. Postnikov's search was still proceeding when, at the beginning of April 1870, Bakunin came up to Geneva from Locarno. On April 11th Postnikov met him for the first time at Ogarev's house. Rumour was current in Geneva that Nechaev was lodging with Bakunin; and on the following day, Postnikov took occasion to call on Bakunin in his humble *pension* "to present his respects" and to look for traces of Nechaev. So far as its second purpose was concerned, the visit proved fruitless. It was evident that Nechaev was not there. But Postnikov was clearly impressed. He too fell, like so many others, under the spell of the shaggy, toothless veteran. Nothing further is heard in his reports of Bakunin's incapacity and

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 276, 278; Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 90.

² Kantor, *V Pogone*, p. 53.

decadence. Bakunin was incomparably the most impressive personality whom Postnikov had met among the Russian revolutionaries in Switzerland. He was not only the most probable source of information about Nechaev; he deserved, from the point of view of an agent of the Third Division, close attention for his own sake.

But the impression had not been made exclusively on one side. Bakunin did not forget the ingratiating manners and the ingenuous revolutionary enthusiasm of the visitor; and when he came to Geneva once more in July 1870, he hastened to call on the "gallant colonel". It was the moment of the quarrel with Nechaev. By Nechaev's defection, Bakunin lost his sole direct contact with his native land. Postnikov seemed admirably qualified to fill the void. Though so ardent a revolutionary, he was, he explained, not yet compromised at home, and could travel freely to and from Russia. It seemed a heaven-sent opportunity. Bakunin assured him that it was the very moment to start a new Russian monthly—it might be called the *Socialist* or the *Russian Commune*—to take the place of *The Bell*. Ogarev would, of course, co-operate. All they needed was someone who could go to Russia and bring them back authentic news of revolutionary doings there. The retired colonel Postnikov was the very man to undertake such a mission; and the more he hesitated, the more Bakunin and Ogarev insisted. The friendly argument produced a close intimacy, and after a week Bakunin had few secrets from his new ally. Besides the collection of political information, he proposed to entrust to the gallant colonel another and still more delicate mission in Russia. Would Postnikov visit the family at Premukhino with a personal message from himself, and endeavour to extract from them his long-delayed share of the paternal inheritance? But Postnikov still hesitated; and nothing had been decided when Bakunin again returned to Locarno at the end of the month.¹

The cause of the hesitation was simple. Postnikov was willing. But Roman had to telegraph to Petersburg for permission and for funds. It was, he did not fail to point out, an excellent opportunity for him to make a verbal report to his superiors and obtain fresh instructions. The necessary authority was at length received, and Ogarev telegraphed to Locarno the glad news of

¹ Kantor, *V Pogone*, pp. 50, 55, 59-60.

Postnikov's impending departure. Bakunin sent to Ogarev, for delivery to the traveller, one of those dry, sour letters which he wrote from time to time in his later years to his brothers and Tatyana—letters which cannot be read without a twinge of pain when set beside the molten outpourings of the golden days of Premukhino. The ageing Michael appealed not to "our ancient friendship which you have murdered", but simply to "your sense of justice, honour, and honesty"; and he "insistently demanded" the immediate payment of his "legal share".

My faith in your fraternal love struggled long against the most evident facts; I carried it to the point of stupidity. At length you have killed it. Crushed by fearful need, I wrote you a number of letters and know that they all reached you. At first you used to answer with mystifying arguments and nebulous calculations, the conclusion of which was that $+1 = -1$. In recent years you have answered with systematic and profound silence. Silence is a convenient means of getting rid of a man who lives a long way off, and is rendered impotent by his political position. Sometimes silence is the mark of injured self-esteem; but when it is combined with the retention of another man's property it requires another interpretation.

There follows a passage which provokes a wan smile, for Michael unconsciously harks back to the days of thirty-five years ago when he used to preach the true Hegelian faith to his adoring sisters.

I ascribe this chiefly to your philosophical studies. Metaphysics have killed your living, simple affections and your sense of justice, of plain fairness. You are so absorbed in the contemplation of your absolute that you have no time left to think of the temporal needs and privations of a man whom you once called your friend and your brother.

The last phrase is the nearest approach in the letter to a display of sentiment. It maintains to the end its character as a dry business epistle couched in chilly and formal terms. The name of Premukhino, once music which touched the most intimate strings in Michael's heart, now meant no more than so many hectares of land which might be sold to provide him with the means of material existence. But did Tatyana, as her mind ranged back to her last sight of Michael driven away in captivity over the snow or, in the remoter distance, to the days of

their proud, passionate, eager youth together—did Tatyana, now in her sixtieth year, read Michael's letter with the same cold absence of emotion?¹

Postnikov, having arrived in Petersburg and received the blessing of his masters, duly paid the prescribed visit to Premukhino. There is unfortunately no record of what passed. But Postnikov achieved what he calls "a settlement of the affair with Bakunin's brothers", and brought back with him 70 roubles—a sum whose paltriness suggests a grudging act of charity rather than the recognition of a claim. There was a promise—or a hope—of more to come; but three months later nothing had arrived. Returning to Geneva in the first days of September 1870, Postnikov decided to accept the pressing invitation which Bakunin had given him six weeks before to visit Locarno. He had got as far as Lucerne, and was looking forward without pleasure to the eight-hour journey by stage-coach over the Gotthard Pass, when he perceived Bakunin alighting from the coach in front of the hotel. Bakunin, hastily dropping his two portmanteaux, threw himself into Postnikov's arms and embraced him three times on the cheek; and it was in these strange surroundings that he received, from an agent of the Russian secret service, his first greeting, after nearly ten years' silence, from his brothers and sisters. Postnikov had nothing to do but to retrace his steps. He travelled with Bakunin as far as Berne. The funds of the Third Division provided him with a first-class railway ticket. His less affluent companion travelled second; and it was perhaps this inequality which suggested to Bakunin the suitability of the occasion for obtaining a loan. He asked for 250 roubles. In a burst of candour he added that he could not, "as an honest man", promise repayment on a definite date, but that he would return the money at the first opportunity. Postnikov hedged. He was not sure whether this was the kind of item which the Third Division would pass in his accounts. But as they paced the platform together at a wayside station before returning to their several compartments, Bakunin insisted; and there was nothing for it but to comply. Postnikov had not so large a sum on his person in cash; but he promised to hand it to Ogarev, to be forwarded to Bakunin, as soon as he reached Geneva.²

¹ Kantor, *V Pogone*, pp. 62-6.

² Kantor, *V Pogone*, pp. 67-71, 83.

Bakunin parted from Postnikov at Berne and, after his customary visit there to the Vogts and Reichels, went on to meet Guillaume at Neuchâtel. Being now in funds, he stayed at the Grand Hotel du Lac, where, during the night of September 11th-12th, he had a long discussion with Guillaume on the publication of the *Letter to a Frenchman*. Guillaume had received no less than six instalments (running in all to some 30,000 words) of this remarkable document. The earlier ones had already been rendered obsolete by the march of events, while the later were full of repetition and incoherence. Bakunin threw the whole amorphous mass on Guillaume's hands. Incapable of revision and impatient of detail, he left his careful young friend full powers to arrange, abridge, and re-write, and 50 francs towards the cost of printing; and next day he continued his journey to Geneva. What Guillaume eventually did was to take the most usable of the material, split it into six sections with introductory formulae of his own, and publish it under the corrected title *Letters to a Frenchman*. Bakunin's original manuscripts survive; and it is noteworthy that, in the course of revision, Guillaume carefully removed from the text all those passages in which Bakunin had invoked the "evil passions" and "popular anarchy . . . like a raging avalanche, devouring and destroying everything, its enemies and the Prussians alike". Bakunin, edited by Guillaume, should at least be free from the taint of Nechaev which his adversaries were so eager to detect in him.

Bakunin stayed long enough in Geneva to have another meeting with his friend Postnikov. On the evening of September 14th, 1870, accompanied by Ozerov, a Russian, and Lankiewicz, a young Pole, he set out on the final stage of his journey. Next morning he was in Lyons.¹

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The confusion in Lyons was complete. On the fall of Napoleon III, a republic had been proclaimed, and a Committee of Public Safety had installed itself in the Hôtel de Ville. Its title was high-sounding and breathed the traditional spirit of revolution. But its political complexion was mixed, and it was by no means clear what it was trying to save. Some spoke of saving the

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 90; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, ii. 81-134, 135-266; iv. 7-12.

revolution; others wanted to form a "sacred union" of all parties to save France from Bismarck. The first act of the committee was to send three delegates, of whom Albert Richard was one, to Paris to negotiate with the new republican government of Gambetta, its relations to which were quite undefined. Finally, on the day of Bakunin's arrival in Lyons, municipal elections were held, and the short-lived and rather ridiculous Committee of Public Safety abdicated in favour of the new municipal council.

Bakunin was once more in his element. For the first time for twenty years he tasted the intoxicating joys of revolution. The situation was not unlike that which had confronted him at Dresden in May 1849. A spontaneous popular rising had placed the *bourgeois* radical government at the helm; and the radicals, half afraid of the revolution which had thrust the power into their hands, scarcely knew what to do next. Bakunin, a giant among pygmies, took the situation in hand. In the absence of Richard, he lodged with Palix, whose flat became the headquarters of a feverish activity. Censuring the local branch of the Alliance for its readiness to shelve its revolutionary principles and join hands with mere radicals, Bakunin decided on the creation of a new revolutionary organ which was called, with singular inappropriateness, the Committee for the Saving of France. On Saturday September 17th, a public meeting was held to inaugurate the new Committee. Its members, besides Bakunin himself, were Ozerov and Lankiewicz, Palix, Blanc, and Richard (who had that very day returned from Paris), Bastelica (who had arrived from Marseilles), and a handful of other Frenchmen. Bakunin was in ecstasies.

There is so much to be done [he wrote to Ogarev] that my head is in a whirl. There is no real revolution here yet, but there will be. Everything is being done and prepared for the real revolution. I am out for all or nothing, and I hope for an early triumph.¹

But Bakunin's enthusiastic preparations soon brought to light unexpected differences of opinion and temperament within the committee. The logical and clear-headed Frenchmen found it difficult to accommodate themselves to Bakunin's methods or

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 90-92; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 304-5; Richard, *Revue de Paris* (September 1st, 1896), p. 147.

aims. They were aware of the sturdy individualism of the French worker and the French peasant. Few of them were anarchists (even the faithful Palix failed to share Bakunin's trust in the natural goodness of "the people"). Some of them were not revolutionaries at all. They neither understood nor approved Bakunin's desire to appeal to the "evil passions"; and when one of Bakunin's new companions angrily retorted that they would get nowhere "until they overcame their prejudice against fire, poison, and the dagger", the utterance was voted altogether "too Kalmuk". There was a general inclination not to proceed to extremes. Moreover Bakunin, who had blamed the members of the Alliance for their association with the radicals, now himself introduced a new complication by light-heartedly endeavouring to enlist the support of Andrieux, a radical who had just been appointed *procureur* of Lyons by the Gambetta Government, and of General Cluseret, an adventurer whose revolutionary convictions (though he had joined the International) were notoriously subservient to his personal ambition. These contacts disconcerted Bakunin's friends and provided further evidence of his habitual lack of discrimination in the choice of instruments. They appear to have had no other effect on the situation.¹

Meanwhile the masses, exasperated by the humiliations of defeat and by the helplessness of the Government, were riper for revolution than their leaders. On the following Saturday, September 24th, 1870, a public meeting passed resolutions demanding such reforms as a levy on the rich and the appointment of army officers by free election. Encouraged by this popular demonstration, Bakunin forced on his hesitating colleagues a long proclamation which embodied most of his cherished ideas. In the name of the "Federated Committees for the Saving of France" (for the original committee had multiplied itself in Bakunin's brain), it enunciated the following principles:

1. The administrative and governmental machine of the State, having become impotent, is abolished. The French people resumes full possession of its destinies.
2. All criminal and civil courts are suspended and replaced by the justice of the people.
3. Payment of taxes and mortgages is suspended. The taxes are

¹ Richard, *Revue de Paris* (September 1st, 1896), pp. 147-53.

replaced by the contributions of the federated communes, levied from the rich classes in proportion to the needs of the security of France.

4. The State, having ceased to exist, cannot intervene in the payment of private debts.
5. All existing municipal organisations are suppressed, and are replaced in all the federated communes by Committees for the Saving of France, which will exercise full powers under the immediate supervision of the people.
6. Each Committee in the chief town of a Department will send two delegates to the Revolutionary Convention for the Saving of France.
7. This Convention will meet immediately at the Hôtel de Ville of Lyons, being the second city of France and in the best position to provide energetically for the defence of the country. This Convention, supported by the whole people, will save France.

The proclamation, which concluded with the appeal, in capital letters, "TO ARMS!!!" and bore some twenty signatures (those of Bakunin, Richard, and Palix among them), was read to an enthusiastic audience at a further meeting on September 26th; and next morning it was placarded throughout the city.¹

Bakunin was now convinced that the time for action was at hand. He wrote hastily to Postnikov begging him to borrow 500 roubles from Tchorzewski for the needs of the revolution. "Either we shall die", he declared consolingly, "or we shall repay the money very soon". The letter was followed by a telegram in which Antonie begged her sister Julie to come at once to Lyons and bring with her the views of Switzerland. In this simple code "Antonie" was Bakunin, and "Julie" Postnikov; and the "views of Switzerland" were Bakunin's *Letters to a Frenchman*, fresh from Guillaume's press. In the meanwhile Bakunin had already proposed to the Committee to arrest "our principal enemies" during the night. In the prevailing state of confusion and unrest, a resolute and well-planned coup might easily have been successful. But Bakunin's French colleagues, though they had been dragged by his tempestuous energy into signing the proclamation, once more recoiled from the proposal to translate words into action; and the riot in which these proceedings terminated was forced on them by provocation from another quarter.

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 93-5.

The defunct Committee of Public Safety had, in a moment of enthusiasm, followed the famous though short-lived precedent of 1848 and turned the local factories into National Workshops. The Municipal Council inherited this blessing from the Committee. But it found the experiment a drain on its limited resources, and chose this inauspicious moment to reduce wages in the workshops from three francs to two and a half francs a day. Such an action was well calculated to arouse indignation even in breasts which had no abstract interest in revolution; and a demonstration at the Hôtel de Ville was planned for September 28th. The Committee for the Saving of France met on the previous evening to consider the situation. Bakunin demanded a general call to arms. He was sure that, once passions were unleashed and fighting begun, the armed forces would go over to the mob; and he even had a plan for administering narcotics to recalcitrant National Guards. His colleagues were embarrassed. They had signed the proclamation which was even now placarded in the town, and which ended with the stirring appeal "TO ARMS!!!" But that was a piece of rhetoric which committed nobody. Bakunin was outvoted, and the Committee merely decided to participate in the demonstration.¹

At noon on the following day, a crowd some thousands strong congregated on the square in front of the Hôtel de Ville. The municipal councillors had prudently provided themselves with other engagements, and were not on the premises. On the discovery of this fact, some hundred persons, including Bakunin and other members of the Committee for the Saving of France, forced their way in, and a French member of the Committee proclaimed from the balcony to the crowd outside that the Municipal Council would be summoned either to accept the proclamation of September 26th or to resign. The subsequent course of events is wrapped in the obscurity and confusion attendant on unorganised popular riots. A company of National Guards arrived on the scene and entered the Hôtel de Ville for the purpose of arresting or expelling the interlopers. The crowd broke in after them and disarmed them; and the Committee found itself, somewhat to its own surprise, once more master of

¹ Kantor, *V Pogone*, pp. 74-5; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 305; Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 95-6; Richard, *Revue de Paris* (September 1st, 1896), p. 155.

the situation. It hastened to constitute itself into a sort of provisional government, and began to deliberate and issue decrees. Only Bakunin—if his own account may be believed—showed any sense of realities outside the council chamber. Resourceful as ever, he proposed that the Prefect, the Mayor, and the general in command of the troops should be arrested. But it was far from clear by what force these arrests were to be effected, more particularly as Cluseret, whom the Committee had appointed military commander, was nowhere to be found and was—as afterwards appeared—busy making his peace with the other side. As the afternoon wore on, companies of the National Guard began to converge on the square. Presently the members of the Committee, looking from the windows of the council chamber, saw themselves surrounded, no longer by enthusiastic supporters, but by the *chassepot* rifles of the Guard. By the time the dispossessed Municipal Council had summoned up courage to return to the Hôtel de Ville, the Committee had ignominiously dispersed, and the revolution of September 28th was at an end.

A minor adventure still awaited Bakunin. More foolhardy than his colleagues, or less exclusively interested in the saving of his skin, Bakunin was still on the premises when the Mayor and his bodyguard entered the Hôtel de Ville. He was seized and clapped into a cellar, where he was roughly handled by his captors and relieved of the ready cash in his pocket, amounting to 165 francs. Having suffered this indignity at the hands of the “brutal and cowardly *bourgeois*”, Bakunin seems to have been forgotten, and an hour later Ozerov and a handful of comrades came and rescued him. He spent the night and the greater part of the next day in hiding. So effective was his concealment that Postnikov, who had just arrived to keep an eye on his movements and had brought with him 300 copies of *Letters to a Frenchman*, failed to find his quarry, and returned to Geneva with his mission unfulfilled. On the evening of September 29th, 1870, Bakunin left stealthily by train to Marseilles. It was afterwards said that Andrieux, when signing the warrant for his arrest, had given secret instructions that he was not to be found, and that this accounted for his easy escape. The story is not well attested. But it accords with the spirit of this anaemic revolution. Discontent with the government was real enough.

But the good Lyonnese had no stomach for class warfare, and not all Bakunin's energy and eloquence could induce them to shed a single drop of one another's blood.¹

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Bakunin spent three weeks in strict seclusion in Bastelica's house at Marseilles. He was penniless, and was reduced to selling his last remaining possession—his revolver. He wrote to Bellerio, an Italian political refugee, who had established himself in Locarno with his son Emilio, begging him to look after Antonia's needs; and he despatched two letters to Postnikov in Geneva. The first begged him to contribute whatever he could afford to the "common cause". The second enclosed a letter which he was to forward, "observing the greatest precautions", to Bakunin's brothers; and though it has not been preserved, we may safely assume that it, too, contained an appeal for money. The letter was duly forwarded by Roman to his employers, who posted it to its destination. The incident tickled the clerk in the Third Division, who annotated Roman's report with a chuckle:

The old revolutionary does not imagine that the Third Division carries its tenderness for him so far that it actually sticks stamps on his letters to his brothers.

A few days' rest at Marseilles helped to revive Bakunin's buoyant optimism. He decided that the fiasco of September 28th was due to the "treachery" of Cluseret and the "cowardice" of Richard. It required only a new and more determined effort to kindle revolution in Lyons. Lankiewicz, the Pole, who had accompanied or followed Bakunin to Marseilles, volunteered to return to Lyons to spy out the ground. Lankiewicz was a young man of much enthusiasm and small experience, and he knew nothing of the special risks incurred by Bakunin's agents. He carried with him a letter from Bakunin to Blanc and Palix, and one of the famous codes containing not only the names of Bakunin's principal associates but "such compromising expressions as assassination, pillage, and arson". Lankiewicz was seized by the authorities and these precious documents discovered on him. Blanc was at once arrested, Palix escaped only

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 96-9, 108-9; Richard, *Revue de Paris* (September 1st, 1896), pp. 156-7; Kantor, *V Pogone*, p. 76; Vyrubov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), p. 58.

because he was ill, and Bakunin's other friends were in imminent danger. The sections of the International and the Alliance, already shattered by the events of September 28th, ceased to exist.¹

This was the last blow. It seemed dangerous for Bakunin to remain any longer in Marseilles. The local authorities were complacent. But the central government at Tours, strengthened by Gambetta's escape from the beleaguered capital, was preparing to deal severely with the socialists; and when Bakunin heard that his old enemy Mieroslawski was now in Gambetta's *entourage*, he was convinced that a new persecution was about to be launched against him. He learned to his alarm that he was being denounced in the French *bourgeois* press as a Prussian agent. He thought of going to Barcelona to visit his Spanish supporters. But more prudent counsels, or lack of funds, prevailed. Friends in Marseilles managed to collect 100 francs to take him home. There was a regular service of ships between Marseilles and Genoa. A sympathetic captain was found to carry him, and a friendly port official to smuggle him on board. By excess of precaution, he shaved his luxuriant hair and beard, donned a pair of spectacles, and provided himself with a false Swiss passport. In this disguise he left the shores of France on October 24th, 1870, for the last time.²

Before the end of the month he was back in Locarno, sunk in the lowest depths of despair.

However much I try to convince myself of the contrary [he had written on the eve of his departure from Marseilles], I believe that France is lost, betrayed to the Prussians by the incapacity, the cowardice, and the cupidity of the *bourgeoisie*. The militarism and the bureaucracy, the aristocratic arrogance and the Protestant Jesuitry of the Prussians, in affectionate alliance with the knout of my dear sovereign lord and master the Emperor of All the Russias, will triumph over the Continent of Europe for I know not how many decades. Goodbye to all our dreams of approaching liberation.

He now began a pamphlet (it was published in the following April under the title *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social*

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 98-9, 108-10, 114; Kantor, *V Pogone*, pp. 78-9; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 313; Richard, *Revue de Paris* (September 1st, 1896), p. 159.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 111-15; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 281; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 313; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxvi. 78

Revolution) in which he attributed the misfortunes of France to the unholy alliance between Prussian and Russian imperialism and, giving full rein to his anti-Teutonic prejudice, plunged into a bitter denunciation of the "persistent and chronic servility of the German *bourgeoisie*". But for the first time in his life his native confidence failed him, and he felt that he was fighting a losing battle against fearful odds. He was almost alone in a hostile, reactionary world. If Ogarev were to die, he would be "the last of the Mohicans of a dead generation". The hopelessness of the financial situation doubtless contributed to his depression. In December 1870 he was once more at the disagreeable game of writing desperate begging letters to his friends.¹

In January 1871 Bakunin bade a last farewell to one of the most faithful of his friends—the retired Russian colonel Postnikov. Roman, having failed to find Nechaev, was recalled by his employers to Petersburg. Bakunin came up from Locarno to meet him at Berne on the way through. Postnikov, who had not seen him since July, was shocked at the change. The old man's health had been sapped by the discomfiture at Lyons and by the hardships of his flight. He breathed heavily, complained of swellings and pains in his legs, and ate and drank little. But his spirits had recovered somewhat, and, averting his eyes from France, he talked cheerfully of the break-up of the Austrian Empire—his dream for thirty years—and of the general European war which would make propaganda possible in Russia itself. War, he felt, was imminent; and he begged particularly that Postnikov would, on his arrival in Russia, study ways and means of propaganda on the Volga and in the Urals, which he considered the most promising fields for this missionary enterprise. He invited Postnikov to visit his brothers at Premukhino; and finally, he asked for a last loan of 60 francs. The two men embraced and parted, Postnikov knowing, and Bakunin perhaps suspecting, that they would meet no more. Bakunin wept like a child. Neither he nor Ogarev ever discovered the identity or the vocation of the agent of the Third Division whom they had entertained unawares.²

The 60 francs were barely sufficient to cover Bakunin's most pressing needs. In this very month of January 1871 he had

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 112; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, ii. 287-455; Kantor, *V Pogone*, pp. 83-4.

² Kantor, *V Pogone*, v. 86-7.

begun to keep a rough day-book of his incomings and outgoings, interspersed with occasional scraps of other information. The entries for January are a sufficiently eloquent record of Bakunin's domestic circumstances at this time:

January 2. Purse empty. Gave Antonia 5 fr. 3. No money. Borrowed 45 fr. from Marie [Marie Orazio, a local acquaintance]. 5. Gave Antonia 20 fr. 9. Gave Antonia 3 fr. 11. No money. 13. No money. 14. Borrowed 40 fr. from Marie. 16. Received 200 fr. from Gambuzzi. 18. Paid 60 fr. to the butcher, and 17 fr. to [undecipherable]. 19. Paid 30 fr. to the baker. In hand 67 frs. 21. In hand 53 fr. 70. 24. 20 fr. in pocket. 25. No tea. 28. Letter to Mme. Franzoni; answer probably to-morrow. What answer? Nothing? 200? 300? 400? 29. Received 300 fr. from Mme. Franzoni. Paris surrendered on the 28th. Bourbaki entered Switzerland. Paid 25 fr. to Nina [the *femme de ménage*] (balance due by Feb. 1st. 20 frs.), 40 fr. to Marie (balance due by Feb. 4th 208 fr.), 55 fr. to Bettoli (balance due 25 fr.) for wood 41 fr. 50; in hand 88 fr.

And this prosaic catalogue of penury may be supplemented by a letter of the same period from Antonia Bakunin:

Michael is in a very despondent state. He says "What can I do? I am too old to begin earning my daily bread. I have not much longer to live." The economic question depresses him so much that he is losing all his energy and moral force; and this after sacrificing his life for the cause of liberty and humanity and never thinking of himself. His brothers have always remained criminally indifferent and passive; Michael hopes to be able to compel his brothers to give him his share in the estate.

In February things were no better. In the middle of March, Bakunin meticulously recorded in the day-book that he had "99 centimes in his pocket". He borrowed 110 francs from his landlady, and went off to Florence to meet Luginin, a Russian friend travelling in Italy. The visit lasted a fortnight, and Bakunin returned to Locarno "very pleased with Luginin". In April Gambuzzi, more perhaps for the sake of Antonia and the children than of Bakunin himself, granted a further "loan" of 1000 francs. About the same time Antonia's family began to send her a monthly allowance of 50 roubles; and these windfalls made the summer of 1871 an oasis of comparative plenty in Bakunin's later career.¹

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 132-3, 146; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Draganov, p. 318.

CHAPTER 30

THE FORCES OF THE ALLIANCE

THE dramatic episodes of Nechaev and the Franco-Prussian war had diverted Bakunin's attention from the essential issue of this period of his career—the struggle between him and Marx to dominate the International. The Bâle Congress in the autumn of 1869 had been the declaration of war. From this time onward, with many interruptions and with the lack of system characteristic of all his activities, Bakunin worked to undermine Marx's commanding position in the International. From this time also Marx, more systematically but not less intermittently (for he too had other preoccupations), plotted and counter-plotted until he compassed his rival's destruction at the Hague Congress of 1872. For eighteen months after his last ill-starred expedition to France in the autumn of 1870, Bakunin remained, except for his one brief visit to Italy, at Locarno. During this period he completed the organisation (in so far as any organisation existed) of the anti-Marxist group within the International; and he elaborated (in so far as he was ever capable of systematic elaboration) those anarchist doctrines which he opposed to the authoritarian communism of Marx.

The rift between Marx and Bakunin, between the General Council of the International and the Alliance, gradually revealed itself as a cleavage between England and Germany, where Bakunin never had any adherents, and the Latin countries, where Marx had little or no influence, with Switzerland divided between the two camps. The first overt breach occurred in Switzerland, where it came to a head even before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war; and an account of events in Switzerland must therefore take precedence of a review of the Bakuninist forces in France, Italy, and Spain.

The person principally responsible for forcing the issue within the ranks of the International in Switzerland was no other than Bakunin's old enemy Nicholas Utin, who settled in Geneva, in the autumn of 1869, at the very moment when Bakunin was

leaving it. Bakunin's retirement to Locarno had a dispiriting effect on the workers' movement in Geneva. On his departure he bequeathed the leadership of the Alliance to Perron, who was already less than lukewarm, and Robin, a young French political exile who had found employment in Perron's workshop. Both stood, by temperament and tradition, far nearer to the Right than to the Left wing of the movement. They soon handed over the affairs of the Alliance to the son of Ogarev's mistress, Henry Sutherland, "a youth", as Bakunin indignantly observed, "who can scarcely think or write"; and its membership became little more than nominal. The other local sections of the International involved themselves in protracted controversy on the domestic politics of Geneva, which filled the columns of the *Égalité*. Bakunin's commanding personality had left a void. Utin, with his customary self-assurance, presented himself as a candidate for the succession. During the last months of 1869 Utin, supported by the charms and the purse of Olga Levashov, quickly made himself indispensable. He was eloquent on Bakunin's shortcomings—his intrigues, his dictatorial methods, his unscrupulousness over money; and this theme found many willing listeners. In January 1870, by a combination of skill and luck, Utin became the effective editor (his two co-editors being nonentities) of the *Égalité*. In March he appeared at a meeting of the Alliance (of which he was not a member) and proposed certain amendments of the statutes which, with the support of Becker, were declared carried. Later in the same month he founded at Geneva the first Russian section of the International, and wrote to the "Venerable Dr. Marx" in London inviting him to assume the rôle of "secretary for Russia" in the General Council. By way of ingratiating himself with Marx, Utin mentioned that among the tasks of the new section would be to fight against pan-Slavism and "publicly to unmask Bakunin".¹

Since the Bâle Congress, Marx had been unaware of Bakunin's whereabouts. He attributed to him, quite falsely, some criticisms of the General Council which appeared during the winter in the *Égalité*; and it was not till January 1870, four months after the event, that he learned of Bakunin's retirement to Locarno. But he was always ready to hear of something to his

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 225-9, 279, 287-8, 298; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 245-6; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 245-9, 275.

rival's disadvantage. The new developments foreshadowed in Utin's letter were welcome and promising. He accepted with alacrity the invitation to become "secretary for Russia". Marx trusted no Russian. In replying to Utin he "judged it more convenient not to mention a single word about Bakunin". But this did not prevent him from drawing his own conclusions. A few days later he circulated to the German sections of the International (who could be trusted to hate a Russian) a "confidential communication" in which he dissected without mercy, and not always with complete accuracy, Bakunin's recent activities. In the last paragraph Marx recorded the formation of Utin's Russian section, and concluded on a note of unconcealed satisfaction. "Thus", he wrote, "the game of this most dangerous intriguer will soon be brought to an end, at any rate within the confines of the International."¹

Utin lost no time in justifying the confidence which Marx had placed in him. In April 1870 the *Fédération Romande*, the union of all the sections of the International in French-speaking Switzerland, held its annual Congress in the little town of La Chaux-de-Fonds in the Jura. The most contentious item on the agenda was the application of the Geneva section of the Alliance for admission to the Federation. Utin, supported by the other Geneva sections, moved that the application should be indefinitely adjourned. The issue was frankly personal. Utin, having secured a platform and an audience, unburdened himself of a bitter diatribe against the absent Bakunin. The indictment relied mainly on the Russian proclamations issued by Bakunin in the previous summer in association with Nechaev. Of these Utin had a knowledge denied to non-Russian members of the International. He was determined to make the most of it. In these pamphlets, he assured his hearers, Bakunin had "proclaimed aloud that, in his so-called revolutionary activities, he recognised neither good faith, nor law, nor justice, nor morality, and that for him, as for the Jesuits, all means are good to use against his enemies". Another orator declared that the Alliance stood for atheism and the abolition of the family. In the Calvinistic atmosphere which pervaded all Geneva institutions these were evidently grave charges.

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 292-8; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiv. 241, 275, 310; xxvi. 37.

There was no real debate. Guillaume, who rose to defend his master, had no knowledge of the Nechaev proclamations and could only plead their irrelevance. But lack of argument was compensated by vehemence of feeling; and when the admission of the Alliance to the Federation was carried by twenty-one votes to eighteen, the Genevese, who constituted the minority, refused to accept the decision and seceded from the Congress. There was, however, an unfortunate *contretemps* which the majority had not foreseen. The owner of the room where the Congress was in session was an adherent of the minority. It was therefore the majority who had to seek new premises to carry on their negotiations, while the Genevese, continuing to sit in the same hall, endeavoured with some success to represent their opponents as the seceders, and themselves as the legitimate congress. Both Congresses now proceeded to pass resolutions in the name of the Fédération Romande, and both appealed to the General Council to endorse their claim. The proceedings had become farcical. But the La Chaux-de-Fonds Congress was a landmark. It was, as Bakunin well knew, "the forerunner of the battle which we shall have to wage at the next General Congress of the International". Meanwhile, in a spirit of bravado, he sent Marx copies of the first five numbers of Nechaev's *Bell*.¹

Utin was not slow to pursue his advantage. On April 16th, 1870, ten days after the end of the La Chaux-de-Fonds Congress, he proposed the expulsion from the central Geneva section of the International of those members of it who were also members of the Alliance—Bakunin, Zhukovsky, Perron, and Henry Sutherland. Bakunin, his head full of Nechaev, took but a meagre interest in these proceedings. A first summons to appear before the committee of the central section received no reply. A second provoked a request to be informed in writing of the charges against him and of the names of his accusers. But it was now too late. Utin had set the machine to work; and at the beginning of August, a formal sentence of expulsion was pronounced *in contumaciam* against the four recalcitrants.²

In the meanwhile, the rift in the Fédération Romande and the appeal to the General Council had compelled Marx to show his

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 3-11; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 264; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiv. 332.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 19, 75-6.

hand. The situation was embarrassing; for, as Engels grudgingly admitted, the Bakuninists were "formally" in the right. It was, however, unthinkable that the General Council should, on mere technical grounds, support the disloyal Bakuninists against the loyal Utin and the equally loyal (though, if the truth were told, decidedly *bourgeois*) Genevese. Marx was equal to the occasion. On June 28th, 1870, after a delay of nearly two months, the General Council resolved that the majority secured by the Bakunist, at the La Chaux-de-Fonds Congress was "only nominal"; that, the committee of the *Fédération Romande* established at Geneva having always carried out its functions correctly, the General Council "had not the right to deprive it of its title"; and that the organisation set up by the majority at La Chaux-de-Fonds should adopt some other name. The majority had, on the whole, come off lightly. They were not excommunicated. They were allowed to retain their membership of the International and their local organisation, provided they ceded the disputed title of "*Fédération Romande*" to the minority of their compatriots. Matters could not rest there. Both sides knew that the battle would have to be fought out on a bigger scale, and with a more decisive result. A fortnight after the resolution of the General Council, a forced truce was imposed by the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. But from this time the International in Switzerland was sharply and irretrievably divided against itself. The Jura sections became fervent supporters of Bakunin and the principles of the Alliance. The Geneva sections, under the leadership of Utin, followed Marx and the General Council.¹

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In France the International had, from the first, a considerable body of adherents, mainly in Paris. The French group professed themselves disciples of Proudhon, preached abstention from political agitation (a wise precaution in the France of Napoleon III), and were in general opposed to the policies and doctrines of Marx. But with this group Bakunin, who never visited Paris after 1864, had no dealings. The Frenchmen whom he enrolled in the Alliance in the autumn of 1868 were those who had signed with him the minority declaration of the Berne Congress—

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 55-6; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiv. 323.

Élisée Reclus (soon to be joined by his brother Élie), Aristide Rey, and Albert Richard. Of these, Rey and the Reclus brothers, who were *bourgeois* radicals rather than revolutionaries, parted company with him a few months later on the dissolution of the International Brotherhood. Albert Richard remained his faithful supporter for more than two years, and Lyons became, for a time, the centre of the Bakuninist movement in France.

Throughout 1869 Richard frequently visited Bakunin in Geneva, and was even introduced by him to Nechaev—a mark of high favour. He was supplied for purposes of correspondence with one of Bakunin's famous codes, which afterwards fell into the hands of the police and was one of the pieces of evidence used to justify the persecution of the International in France. In March 1870 the French sections of the International held a Congress at Lyons. Bakunin failed to appear in person. But he sent an address to the Congress in which he advocated abstention from *bourgeois* politics and a "collective dictatorship of all revolutionaries". Throughout the summer of 1870 Bakunin was full of optimism about the coming French revolution. Nowhere did the prospects of the Alliance seem brighter than in France.¹

The disaster of the war and the fiasco of Bakunin's own intervention at Lyons quickly turned this mood of hope and confidence into one of despair. The insurrection of the Paris Commune, which broke out in March 1871, did little to relieve the gloom. Varlin, a French working-man whom Bakunin had met at the Bâle Congress, and with whom he had since corresponded, was a member of the Commune. Malon was *maire* of an *arrondissement*. Élie Reclus became director of the National Library. But Bakunin never claimed that the Commune owed anything to the doctrines or organisation of the Alliance, and with unwonted pessimism he predicted its failure from the outset. In France the Commune brought the direct influence of the Alliance to an end; and discredit was thrown on the very name of the Alliance by the action of Richard and Blanc, who, having visited the ex-Emperor in exile at Chislehurst, received subsidies from him and published a pamphlet appealing to the working-class to bring back Napoleon. But Bakunin's ideas found a more

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 244-5; Richard, *Revue de Paris* (September 1896), pp. 139-43.

congenial soil, and struck deeper roots, in France than those of Marx. The refugees of the Commune were, almost to a man, anti-Marxists. Through the *communards* in London, Bakunin found, for the first time, unexpected support in England. In Geneva, Malon, who with several other refugees had joined the central Geneva section of the International, had a violent quarrel with Utin which completely reconciled Bakunin to him. The delegates from France who voted on Marx's side at the Hague Congress were unable to disclose their names for fear of police persecution, and the nature of their credentials was open to serious doubt.¹

In Italy the successes of the Bakuninists were more conspicuous. The branch of the Alliance at Naples founded in the autumn of 1868 by Gambuzzi, which had sent Bakunin as its delegate to Bâle, was one of the most active bodies of his supporters; and several Italians, including Gambuzzi and Fanelli, were also enrolled in the Geneva section of the Alliance. Bakunin's move to Locarno brought him once more into direct contact with Italy. In the spring of 1870 he visited Milan to meet Gambuzzi (the primary motive was no doubt a discussion of finance), and induced a group of Italian radicals to form a section of the International there. His hopes of a revolution in Italy on the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War were quickly disappointed. But in March 1871, when he went to Florence to meet Luginin, there was a conference of his Italian friends at which yet another of his famous "programmes" was drafted. By this time there were two or three groups in Italy calling themselves sections of the International, though it is doubtful whether any of them had formally enrolled themselves or recognised the General Council.²

The insurrection of the Paris Commune, which broke out on the eve of Bakunin's visit to Florence, had an important influence on his position in Italy. During his period of residence there prior to 1867, he had parted company with Mazzini by rejecting both Mazzini's most cherished ideals—religion and nationalism. Hitherto, however, the two men had refrained from attacking each other; and Mazzini, on one occasion, actually

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 248, 256-7; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 318, 323; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxvi. 166-7.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 59; Nettlau, *Grünbergs Archiv*, ii. 302-3.

visited Bakunin at Locarno. The Commune forced the issue between them. Mazzini, having seen the achievement of Italian unity, became in his last years less and less of a revolutionary, and in his paper, the *Roma del Popolo*, he vigorously denounced the Commune as an anti-national and anti-religious movement. In July 1871 he extended his attack to the International, warning the Italian working-man against this atheistic and immoral institution which had been hand-in-glove with the Commune.

This was too much for Bakunin. He hastened to the support of the Commune and the International, and published in a Milan journal *The Reply of an Internationalist to Giuseppe Mazzini*. Bakunin welcomed the reproach that the International was materialist and atheistic.

Where [he asks] did we find the other day the materialists and atheists? In the Paris Commune. And where the idealists, the believers in God? In the Versailles National Assembly. What did the men of Paris want? The emancipation of labour and thereby the emancipation of mankind. What does the triumphant Assembly of Versailles now want? The final degradation of mankind beneath the double yoke of the spiritual and temporal power. . . .

At the moment when the heroic population of Paris, more noble than ever before, was being massacred by tens of thousands, women and children among them, defending the most human, the most just, the most exalted cause ever known in history—the *emancipation of the workers of the whole world*—at the moment when the detestable coalition of every form of unclean reaction was pouring on their heads every calumny which unbounded infamy alone can invent—at that moment Mazzini, the great, the unspotted democrat Mazzini, turning his back on the cause of the proletariat and remembering only his mission of prophet and priest, begins to launch against them his insults.

Having plunged into the fray, Bakunin gathered energy as he went. The article finished, he began a long dissertation on the same theme which, contrary to his usual custom, was finished, and was published at the end of the year by Guillaume under the title *Mazzini's Political Theology and the International*. Meanwhile, several Italian socialists hostile to Mazzini had visited Locarno to hail this new and doughty champion and to lay further plans for an offensive. In November 1871 a workers' congress, organised by the Mazzinists, met at Rome. Bakunin

wrote a *Circular to my Italian Friends* which was printed and distributed to the delegates; and when a motion was put to the vote approving the principles of Mazzini, three delegates made a declaration that they considered these principles "contrary to the best interests of the working-class and to the cause of humanity", and withdrew from the congress. One of the three was a serious and well-to-do young man named Cafiero. He had recently visited London, and had been received by Marx and Engels as a promising recruit to the cause. But he was now quite won over by Bakunin's eloquence (though he had never met him face to face) and became an ardent disciple.¹

War was thus declared between Mazzini and Bakunin for the control of the Italian workers' movement, and from this time there was a constant flow of correspondence between Locarno and the Italian Left-wing socialists. The Mazzinists scored a point by publishing in Italian an excerpt from Herzen's posthumous memoirs, in which Bakunin's rôle in the Polish insurrection of 1863 was gently derided. But more weight attached to an enthusiastic pronouncement of Garibaldi, made after the Rome Congress, that the International was "the sun of the future". In December 1871 a new society, "the Workers' *Fascio*", came into being at Bologna with local groups of *Fasci* in the principal towns. The relation of the *Fascio* to the International was obscure even to its own members. In January 1872 Bakunin, who wished to place on Marx the onus of the breach, urged his Italian friends to affiliate themselves to the International, to recognise the General Council, and to avoid direct polemics against it in their press. But in the spring the *Fascio* was still debating whether it should accept the authority of the General Council or that of the Jura Federation, or remain autonomous. These questions of organisation were neither understood nor appreciated in Italy. No clear distinction seems to have been drawn between the International and the Alliance, and the secret programme of the latter was known only to a few intimates whom Bakunin had enrolled during their visits to Locarno. The loyalty of the Italian workers was purely personal. When Mazzini died in March 1872, Michael Bakunin, whom few of them had ever seen, became the oracle of the Italian

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 227, 247; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 109-28, 305-422.

proletariat. His influence was at its height during the summer which preceded the Hague Congress.¹

In Spain, as in Italy, the Bakuninists were the pioneers of the International; for it was the Italian Fanelli who, at Bakunin's suggestion, had founded the first branches of the International in Madrid and Barcelona in the autumn of 1868. Bakunin's subsequent reproach that Fanelli had "confused the International with the Alliance", and "founded the International with the programme of the Alliance", seems to be without substance. Had these branches been constituted as sections of the Alliance, they would have lost this character, and been transformed into sections of the International, when the public Alliance ceased to exist in the summer of 1869. In fact, the formal situation in Spain is far less obscure than elsewhere. The Spanish branches, which had become numerous enough by June 1870 to form a Spanish Federation, were fully recognised sections of the International. Meanwhile the two Spanish delegates at the Bâle Congress, Sentinon and Pellicer, were not only enrolled by Bakunin in the Geneva section of the Alliance, but initiated into his secret Alliance. Knowing little of Bakunin, they took this half-mythical organisation far more seriously than most of his recruits, and on their return to Barcelona they set up there a secret Social-Democratic Alliance composed of select members of the International, with statutes which followed closely the lines laid down by Bakunin. Fourteen members of the Barcelona group are known. Similar secret groups of the Alliance existed within the other Spanish branches of the International. Throughout 1870 and 1871 Bakunin kept up a lively correspondence with Sentinon, Pellicer, and other members of the Alliance in Spain; and there matters stood when, early in 1872, Marx took counter-measures.²

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In the preceding pages the term "Alliance" has been used in the loose and undefined way in which it was employed by Bakunin himself. Throughout these years he seems to have applied it, now to the public Social-Democratic Alliance dissolved in 1869, now to the Geneva section of the Alliance which

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 268-90; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 312, 345, 580.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 54, 270-71; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 203.

survived that dissolution, and now to the secret society, or series of *secrèt* societies, over which he had presided since 1864. The existence and attributes of the Alliance were the points on which the breach with Marx finally turned, and it is therefore important to seek such measure of precision as can be arrived at in regard to this bewildering organisation.

The history of the name is but one element of the confusion in which all the affairs of the Alliance are involved. In Naples, Bakunin had founded a secret International Brotherhood. In later years he sometimes referred not only to this International Brotherhood, but even to the Italian Brotherhood previously founded by him in Florence, as the "Alliance". But there is no clear evidence of the use of this term at the time. In 1867 Bakunin carried the Brotherhood with him, though most of its personnel changed, to Switzerland, where it continued to exist until its formal dissolution early in 1869. In the meanwhile Bakunin founded, on his secession from the League of Peace and Freedom in the autumn of 1868, the "Social-Democratic Alliance", which was to operate within the framework of the International. He had originally desired to make this Alliance a secret body, but agreed, on the insistence of his supporters, to give it a public and open character. Notwithstanding this concession to the judgment of others, Bakunin continued to initiate his intimates (including Perron, whose story has already been quoted) into a secret organisation which he referred to indifferently as "the Alliance" or "the Brotherhood". This process was not interrupted by the disappearance of the old International Brotherhood at the beginning of 1869, and the only conclusion which can be drawn is that the organisation for which Bakunin was recruiting after that time was the secret Alliance which he had abandoned in deference to his friends' opinions, but which still existed in his own imagination. The public Alliance was dissolved, on the demand of the General Council, in July 1869. Henceforth the only body known to the world as the "Social-Democratic Alliance" was the moribund Geneva section which still kept that name. But when Bakunin spoke and wrote—as he unceasingly did—of "the Alliance", it was not of the Geneva section he was thinking, but of the secret Alliance of his dreams. He continued to invite his friends—and sometimes even strangers—to join it, composed statutes and

programmes for it, and, undeterred by his experiences in London, distributed codes for correspondence between the initiated. The code sent to Albert Richard was one of many; and several draft programmes, varying slightly according to Bakunin's caprice of the moment, have survived to puzzle posterity.

The question of the existence of the secret Alliance divided and bewildered the Hague Congress. It has divided subsequent commentators, most of whom have been content to give dogmatic answers inspired by the colour of their political opinions. In fact, the question is not one which can be answered by an unqualified affirmative or an unqualified negative. The evidence of Bakunin himself is significantly contradictory. "I sit in my corner", he said once at Locarno, "and quietly weave my spider's web." But the gossamer was so fine that he could not always see it himself. He would whip up the enthusiasm of his Spanish supporters by telling them that in Italy "our dear Alliance has spread far and wide". Yet in controversy with Marx and the General Council he could declare, with equal aplomb, that the secret Alliance "had never existed except in their imagination". This last statement is certainly untrue. The secret Alliance existed in the imagination of Bakunin himself and those of his friends who took seriously everything that he said or wrote; and since his Spanish friends belonged to that category, it existed as a local organisation in Spain. Elsewhere, it can scarcely be said to have had an objective existence.

Bakunin writes to Morago [commented Guillaume many years later on one of Bakunin's Spanish letters] as to an International Brother (which he was not) and, giving free rein to his imagination, paints a picture of an organisation which existed only theoretically in Bakunin's brain as a kind of dream indulged in with delight, a chimaera formed in the clouds of his cigarette smoke.¹

The evidence of Guillaume, a literal-minded, unimaginative, and perfectly honest person, is indeed crucial. In the days when the public Alliance still existed, Guillaume had founded a secret group of "advanced men" in the International at Le Locle. He was from 1869 to 1872 one of Bakunin's warmest admirers and closest collaborators, and is more than once referred to by others, including Bakunin himself, as one of the leaders of the alleged

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, i. 76-7.

secret Alliance. Yet Guillaume, both at the Hague Congress and afterwards, emphatically denied its existence. From his own standpoint he was right. There was no record of the foundation of a secret Alliance. It had no list of members, no agreed rules or programme (since Bakunin's numerous drafts were all made on his own responsibility), no officers, no subscriptions, and no regular meetings. A political association having none of these attributes was a myth.¹

In short, the secret Alliance belonged mainly to that world of make-believe in which Bakunin passed so many of his later days. But what rôle did his own imagination assign to it? What was the purpose of a secret Alliance lurking within the fabric of the International? Bakunin never forgot the conclusion which he had drawn from the experience of 1848. Public agitation could not by itself overthrow the existing order. The ground must be simultaneously undermined by conspiracy. In promoting the solidarity of the working class—so Bakunin wrote to his Spanish supporters in the spring of 1872—the International had rendered an immense service to the cause of social revolution. But it was “not an organisation capable of organising and leading that revolution”. The purpose of the Alliance was to “give the International a revolutionary organisation”. The International was to provide the army of the revolution. The Alliance was to constitute the general staff. Bakunin himself, as he once told Postnikov, was “a sort of Governor-General”.

This contrast between the rôles assigned to the International as a whole and to the Alliance explains the inconsistency with which Bakunin has frequently been reproached. In the International he demanded complete freedom for the individual. He denounced the despotism of Marx and the General Council, who wanted to “turn the International into a sort of monstrously colossal State, subject to a single official opinion represented by a strong central authority”. He declared that “the unity, the strength, and the meaning of the International were to be found not at the top, but at the bottom, not in the General Council transformed into a government, but in the autonomy and

¹ Kantor, *V Pogone*, p. 83; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 371-2; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 202; Nettlau, *Grünbergs Archiv*, iv. 289; Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 12-13.

voluntary federation of all the sections". But these principles did not in the least apply to the select and secret Alliance, whose members were to be "like unseen pilots in the tempest of popular passion". The revolution was to be directed "not by any visible power, but by the collective dictatorship of all the members of the Alliance". For this purpose, members of the Alliance must be willing to submit their personal freedom to discipline as rigid as that of the Jesuits (Bakunin returns more than once to this comparison), whose strength lay in the "obliteration of the individual before the collective will, organisation and activity". Bakunin could see nothing incompatible in demanding the loosest possible form of organisation for the International and the strictest possible discipline in the ranks of the Alliance. It does not seem to have occurred to him that Marx and the General Council may have considered themselves equally qualified to perform the functions of a general staff, and to exercise a "collective dictatorship" over the forces of revolution.¹

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iii. 100-102, 105; Kantor, *V Pogone*, p. 55; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 259, 268.

CHAPTER 31

MARX *VERSUS* BAKUNIN

THE truce which the Franco-Prussian War had imposed on the struggle between the Marxists and Bakuninists in the International lasted rather more than six months. In March 1871 strife flared up again at Geneva. Utin, having secured the expulsion of Bakunin and his friends from the central Geneva section, now set out to exclude them from the International altogether by declaring that the Geneva section of the Alliance had never been regularly admitted by the General Council. Bitter controversy raged at Geneva, while the question was referred to London. The General Council, unwilling to support the Alliance, but unable to deny its credentials, waited for three months before officially confirming them; and the delay confirmed Bakunin's suspicion, which rests on slender evidence, that Utin's action had been prompted by Marx. The whole issue of the Alliance could not be evaded much longer. The General Council considered that the European situation was not yet sufficiently stable to admit of a public congress of the International, and summoned a private conference to meet in London in September.¹

Bakunin, in his retreat at Locarno, saw that the critical moment was approaching.

A formidable storm [he wrote to the members of the Alliance at the beginning of August], prepared long in advance by our vile enemies at Geneva in concert with the authoritarian communists of Germany, threatens to break, not only on the Alliance, but on the whole Federation of the Jura. The object is nothing less than to exclude the Federation, which alone represents the true spirit of the International in Switzerland, from the international community of workers.

In July 1871 he had begun to write a long historical sketch of the Alliance. But it was conceived on so massive a scale that,

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 157-60, 174-7.

when he broke off the work at the 141st page, he was still in the throes of his introduction and had not so much as mentioned the Alliance. Now he started another *Report on the Alliance*, which brought the story of the Alliance down to the Bâle Congress, but also remained unpublished and unfinished. For while he was engaged on it, an incident occurred which showed how slender was the strength of the Geneva Alliance, and how precarious its position, once the stimulus of his own presence was with-drawn.¹

It was now nearly two years since Bakunin had gone to live at Locarno, and a year since he had visited Geneva for the last time. The Alliance had dwindled to a tiny handful of dispirited members, led by the unimpressive Zhukovsky. They had no stomach for a fight, and the news of the impending London Conference, which had called forth all Bakunin's warlike spirit, merely filled them with dismay. On August 6th, 1871, these craven-hearted revolutionaries met quietly at Geneva and decided to forestall trouble by dissolving the Alliance. Bakunin, who had learned indirectly of the proposal and had written on that very day to protest against it, was furious at being presented with this *fait accompli*. The wrath of Bakunin proved more efficacious than the fears inspired by the General Council. The defaulters, having secured the co-operation of a few French refugees, met again and hastily reconstituted themselves into a new section under the name of the "Section for Propaganda and Social-Revolutionary Action". This manœuvre presented every possible disadvantage. The disappearance of the mere name of the Alliance was unlikely to conciliate the Marxists; and the new section did not enjoy the official recognition which its predecessor had secured from the General Council.²

When, therefore, in the middle of September 1871 the London Conference at length assembled, it was clear that the dice had been well and truly loaded. Utin and another sworn enemy of Bakunin came to represent Geneva. The Jura sections, having refused to bow to the decision of the General Council and abandon the title of *Fédération Romande*, received no invitation, and stated their case by letter. The Conference, under the unflinching guidance of Marx and Engels, devoted itself with zeal to the

¹ Bakunin, *Œuvres*, vi. 17-99, 161, 171-280.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 177-86, 218.

campaign against the Bakuninists. It reaffirmed the principle of taking part in any political activities which seemed likely to further the cause of revolution. It forbade sections or branches "to designate themselves by sectarian names . . . or to form separatist bodies under the name of *sections of propaganda*, etc., pretending to accomplish special missions distinct from the common purposes of the Association". It confirmed the decision of the General Council to recognise the La Chaux-de-Fonds minority and its Geneva committee as the legitimate *Fédération Romande*, and enjoined the majority committee, if it wished to be recognised by the General Council, to take the name of "*Fédération Jurassienne*". Lastly, it instructed the General Council publicly to disavow the activities of Nechaev and to prepare a report on the affair. The execution of this last resolution was entrusted to the willing and competent Utin. The intention to discredit Bakunin was patent, for in Nechaev himself the International had never displayed the slightest interest.¹

The Bakuninists lost no time in replying to the manoeuvres of the London conference against them. In November 1871 they organised a congress at Sonvillier in the Jura. It was not attended by Bakunin, and the moving spirits, besides Guillaume, were two watchmakers of the Jura, Spichiger and Schwitzguébel. The newly founded Geneva "*Section for Propaganda*" sent two delegates—Zhukovsky and Jules Guesde, a French refugee who afterwards played a prominent part in the French socialist movement. The other delegates all came from the Jura. The first act of the congress was to make formal compliance with the decision of the General Council, in order to deprive the Council of any excuse for excluding its members from future meetings of the International. It abandoned the title of *Fédération Romande*, the cause of so many heart-burnings, and adopted that of *Fédération Jurassienne*. But it refused to recognise the London conference as a properly constituted organ of the International, and it denounced as abusive the autocratic powers exercised by the General Council. It elected a federal committee. But that committee, in accordance with the principles just proclaimed, was to exercise no other functions than those of a central office for purposes of correspondence.

The principal work of the congress was, however, to draft a

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 202-14.

document which became famous in the history of the International as the *Sonvillier Circular*. In this circular, which was printed and distributed to all sections of the International in France, Belgium, Spain, and Italy, the Bakuninists demanded the immediate convocation of a plenary Congress of the International, and officially launched their attack on the autocracy of the General Council.

If there is an undeniable fact [said the *Circular*] attested a thousand times by experience, it is the corrupting effect of authority on those in whose hands it is placed. . . . The functions of members of the General Council have come to be regarded as the private property of a few individuals. . . . They have become in their own eyes a sort of government; and it was natural that their own particular ideas should seem to them to be the official and only authorised doctrine of the Association, while divergent ideas expressed by other groups seem no longer a legitimate expression of opinion equal in value to their own, but a veritable heresy.

The solution, continued the *Circular*, was to deprive the General Council of its dictatorial powers and to make it, like the federal committee of the *Fédération Jurassienne*, "a simple office for correspondence and statistics".¹

It was clear that the demand for a Congress could no longer be resisted. There had been no general Congress of the International since September 1869. In 1870 the Franco-Prussian war had rendered a meeting impossible, and in 1871 the private conference in London had been substituted. In September 1872 the full Congress must meet, and the issue between Marxists and Bakuninists be fought to a finish. The intervening period was spent by both sides in sharpening their weapons. In May, by way of counterblast to the *Sonvillier Circular*, the General Council issued a pamphlet entitled *Les Prétendues Scissions dans L'Internationale*. It was from Marx's pen and couched in Marx's best polemical style. Bakunin remarked that "the sword of Damocles which threatened us" had turned out to be "not a sword, but Marx's habitual weapon, a heap of filth", and saw in the pamphlet a further proof of "Marx's disastrous domination of the General Council". On the Bakuninist side, the conscientious Guillaume sat down to write a monumental *Mémoire de la*

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 232-41.

Fédération Jurassienne, of which only the first section had been completed by the following September.¹

More important, however, than this ponderous official pamphleteering were the attempts made by both sides to secure votes at the forthcoming Congress. The *Sonvillier Circular* was sympathetically received not only in Italy and Spain, but in Belgium. Marx canvassed obscure sections of the International in Germany and the United States, begging those which could not afford to send delegates to give him blank mandates which he could distribute to reliable supporters. But Marx did not rely solely on numbers. He meant not only to outvote but to discredit his rival. The case against Bakunin at the Congress rested mainly on two pieces of evidence obtained by Marx's untiring efforts.

Marx's principal success was in Spain. He had long had reason to suspect the existence within the International of a secret Alliance founded by Bakunin; and he was aware that the strength of this organisation, if it existed, lay in Spain. One of Marx's daughters had married Paul Lafargue, a French Creole born in Cuba. Lafargue spoke Spanish fluently and could pass as a Spaniard. At the end of 1871 Marx sent him to Spain to spy out the land and to counteract the Bakuninist campaign there. Lafargue, who translated his name into the Spanish form and appeared as Pablo Farga, had a highly successful mission. He founded a Marxist branch of the International at Madrid which appointed him as its delegate for the forthcoming Congress; and he obtained copies, not only of the statutes of the Spanish secret Alliance, but of a letter of instructions sent by Bakunin to one of his Spanish followers. These documents sufficed to convince Marx that his suspicions were well grounded, and that he could prove his case against Bakunin up to the hilt. In July 1872, on Lafargue's return from Spain, the General Council summoned the Congress for the ensuing September 2nd at The Hague.²

In addition to the Spanish documents obtained by Lafargue, Marx had another weapon in his armoury. The story of the threatening letter from Nechaev to Lyubavin, which had

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 294-6.

² Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxvi. 269, 276; Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 272-7, 289.

terminated Bakunin's efforts to translate *Capital* into Russian, had gone the round of the Russian colony in Switzerland, and Utin must at some time or other have retailed it to Marx. Now, as the decisive hour approached, it occurred to Marx that this letter, if he could by any means obtain possession of it, would be a damning and effective weapon against Bakunin, whose complicity in it could reasonably be assumed. Marx had only one correspondent in Russia, a student of economics named Danielson. In the middle of August 1872 he wrote to Danielson begging him to borrow from Lyubavin the incriminating letter. It seemed a long shot. But it succeeded. Lyubavin, who had not forgotten his cavalier treatment by Bakunin, sent the letter, and Marx set off triumphantly for The Hague with this compromising paper in his pocket, more confident than ever that he had his rival at his mercy.¹

As events turned out, the Bakuninists suffered less from all the manœuvres and expedients of the Marxists than from one blunder committed in their own camp. Early in August 1872 twenty Italian sections of the International held a congress at Rimini for the purpose of founding an Italian federation. The Italians were anti-Marxist to a man. They sent Bakunin a warm message of greeting, and denounced the tyranny of the General Council in terms which he could only have approved. So far, all seemed well. But, unluckily for Bakunin, these hot-headed Italians were carried away by the logic of their own eloquence. Instead of deciding to support the other Bakuninists at the Hague Congress in an attempt to divest the General Council of its autocratic powers, they forthwith broke off relations with it, refused to send delegates to The Hague at all, and voted for the immediate foundation of a new anti-Marxist International in Switzerland in collaboration with the *Fédération Jurassienne*. This premature decision gravely embarrassed the Bakuninists. It not only deprived them of a solid *bloc* of votes at the forthcoming congress, but provided an ample justification for the favourite charge of the Marxists that Bakunin was trying not to reform, but to disrupt, the International.²

¹ Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxvi. 284; Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 13, 323.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 311-13.

On September 2nd, 1872, the Congress duly assembled at The Hague in a building known, by an anticipatory stroke of irony, as the Concordia Hall. Bakunin was too poor, or too infirm, to make the journey. But Marx and Engels were present, for the first and last time, at a Congress of the International—a sure tribute to the importance of the occasion. The first business of the Congress was the verification of the credentials of the delegates; and this task, which was entrusted to a committee, proved so arduous and so controversial that it occupied three full days. The rules regarding representation at Congresses were necessarily vague and elastic. Conditions differed in the different countries; and in some, notably in France and Germany, the state of the law prevented the formation of regular, publicly avowed sections of the International. Of the sixty-six delegates who presented themselves at The Hague, sixty-four were duly admitted. They were drawn from every important European country except Italy and Russia (Utin having left Geneva and deserted the cause). Four hailed from the United States and one from Australia. Forty of them, including the whole of the German and the rather dubious French contingents, were good Marxists; and the General Council was therefore assured of its majority. Of the remainder, only the two delegates from the Jura, Guillaume and Schwitzguébel, and four Spaniards were, properly speaking, Bakuninists. The other members of the minority, including the English, Belgian and Dutch contingents, had no great interest in Bakunin's personality or doctrine. They shared with the Bakuninists only their revolt against the autocracy of Marx. Zhukovsky, who had come to represent the Geneva "Section for Propaganda", was one of the two rejected delegates.

Yet notwithstanding the solid majority which Marx had secured at the Congress the position was not reassuring. In Italy and Spain the revolutionary movement had been entirely captured by the Bakuninists. In Switzerland, the *Fédération Jurasienne* was in open revolt; and since the defection of Utin, the Marxists had lost their fighting spirit. During the past twelve months, the opposition had spread to Belgium, to Holland, and—worst of all—to England, the seat of the General Council itself. In these conditions Marx's supremacy was growing every day more precarious. Political conditions precluded a transfer

of the General Council to France or Germany; and in every other European country where the International had taken root, Bakunist influence was in the ascendant. Marx took his decision swiftly and without warning. The Congress seemed to be proceeding normally enough. It appointed a committee of five to investigate the alleged machinations of the Alliance against the International. It reiterated the importance of political action by the proletariat. It rejected by a handsome majority the proposal of the Bakunists to convert the General Council into a "central office for correspondence and statistics", and bestowed on the Council even wider disciplinary powers than it already possessed to deal with recalcitrant sections. Then, on the last day but one of the Congress, Marx sprang his surprise. He proposed that the General Council should be moved from London and established in New York. In the United States, at any rate, the Bakunist danger would be sufficiently remote; and the Council, if impotent, would at least be orthodox. The proposal threw confusion into the ranks of Marxists and anti-Marxists alike. There was much cross-voting, and it was carried by a narrow majority. The six Bakunists abstained from voting. In fact, they had nothing to gain or lose by the decision. Marx had killed the International. But he had saved it from them.¹

There was one further item on the agenda, the charge against the Alliance. The committee, composed of one German, three Frenchmen, and a Belgian, made a serious effort to discharge its delicate task with impartiality. It heard Engels, who presented to it the documents received from Spain, and several other members of the General Council; and, on the other side, it heard Guillaume, Schwitzguébel, Zhukovsky, and the four Spaniards. The evidence was conflicting, and in the highest degree confusing. Engels argued, on the strength of his documents, that Bakunin had founded a secret Alliance whose principles were opposed to those of the International, and that this Alliance had continued to exist, not merely after the dissolution of the public Alliance, but up to the present time. Guillaume denied all knowledge of any secret Alliance. The Spaniards admitted that a secret Alliance had existed, but declared that they were no longer members of it.

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 321-43.

The problem might well have puzzled men with a wider knowledge of the laws of evidence and a profounder insight into Bakunin's psychology than was possessed by any member of the Hague committee; and the report, which the committee—the Belgian member dissenting—presented to the Congress was a blend of naïvety and irrelevance. Its first two conclusions amounted to a verdict of not proven. It declared, firstly, that a secret Alliance, whose statutes were completely opposed to those of the International, had existed; and secondly, that Bakunin attempted to found, and perhaps succeeded in founding, a society called the Alliance with statutes differing from those of the International. These conclusions were lame and impotent. But they represented the best which the committee could make of the documents obtained by Lafargue, combined with the statement of the Spaniards that they were no longer members of any secret organisation. The third conclusion was of a different character. It seems to have gone altogether beyond the committee's terms of reference, for it had nothing to do with the charges relating to the Alliance. But it was at least clear and emphatic. It declared that "Bakunin had used fraudulent measures for the purpose of appropriating all or part of another man's wealth—which constitutes fraud—and further, in order to avoid fulfilling his engagements, had by himself or through his agents had recourse to menaces". No details were given; but the allusion was clearly to the Nechaev letter. On the basis of these conclusions, the committee recommended (though its terms of reference merely required it to report on facts, not to recommend action) that Bakunin should be expelled from the International; and it further recommended the expulsion of Guillaume and Schwitzguébel on the ground that "they still belonged to the society called the Alliance"—a society of whose present existence it had just declared that there was "no sufficient proof". The Spanish delegates were recommended for a reprieve.

By a fortunate chance, it is not difficult to unravel the tangled skein of this amazing document. Both Guillaume and Marx have left statements which are plausible in themselves and tend to confirm each other. The committee, which had been appointed on Wednesday evening, made its report to the Congress on the evening of Saturday. On Saturday afternoon, after the com-

mittee had heard all the accused, and several members of the General Council including Engels, Guillaume met the three members of the committee who eventually signed the report (one having retired, and the fifth dissenting). They told him they had arrived at "no serious result". Between that time and the presentation of the report the same evening, the committee heard its last witness, Marx. Three months later, Marx wrote to Danielson that he had read to the committee, "under the seal of silence, and without mentioning the addressee", Nechaev's letter to Lyubavin, and that "the letter had done its work". The confession is significant. Marx had kept his trump card, this irrelevant but damning letter, up his sleeve to the last. He would have preferred that Bakunin should be condemned on political grounds. He would have preferred, in accordance with his usual tactics, to remain in the background and not appear in person before the committee. But on this momentous Saturday afternoon he must have learned, like Guillaume, that the committee had reached "no serious result"; and lest his rival should escape, he decided to play his trump card and throw his personal weight into the fray.

These considerations make it easy to dissect the famous report. The first two conclusions had probably been drafted before the committee heard Marx; they represent the absence of serious result of which its members had spoken to Guillaume on the Saturday afternoon. The third conclusion, containing the charge of fraud and menaces, was admittedly inspired by Marx. The recommendation for the expulsion of Bakunin which follows on the third conclusion, and the recommendations for the expulsion of Guillaume and Schwitzguébel on grounds which contradict the first conclusion, must also have been the result of the interview with Marx. The composite character of the document is thus clearly revealed. The first two conclusions are the unaided work of the committee; the remainder of the report is in substance the work of Marx. And the committee in its haste lacked the time or the intelligence to fit the two parts together. It did not matter much. The Congress, on receiving the report, hastened to vote by large majorities the expulsion of Bakunin and Guillaume from the International. These executions satisfied its thirst for slaughter, and the motion for the expulsion of Schwitzguébel was narrowly defeated. The Congress—the last important

event in the history of the First International—was declared closed.¹

Michael Bakunin and Karl Marx were the rival protagonists about whose names and doctrines the revolutionary movement of the later nineteenth century grouped itself. They developed under many of the same influences. In both cases the foundation was laid by Hegel. Both conceived revolution as the product of an Hegelian antithesis between positive and negative, between conservative and progressive; and both believed that, through the destruction of the former by the latter, the synthesis of a new order would come into being. In this sense Marx could perfectly well have subscribed to Bakunin's dictum: "The passion for destruction is also a creative passion". The political exigencies of the time (and, perhaps, their own temperaments) led them both to place destruction in the forefront of their programmes.

At this point, however, they parted company in their interpretation of Hegel. Marx, who had gone all the way with the Young Hegelians, became a thorough-going materialist and found the motive power of progress in class conflict and the clash of economic class interests. Bakunin, in his famous article on *Reaction in Germany*, had named Strauss and Feuerbach as his teachers. But in the same article he had defined history, in pure Hegelian style, as the "free, inevitable development of a free spirit". In essence, he remained a Hegelian idealist; and where he moved beyond Hegel, he was influenced less by the Young Hegelians than by the extreme idealist and individualist, Max Stirner. The absolute freedom which Bakunin preached was utterly different in character, not only from the freedom of Marx (which meant the freedom of a class as against other classes, not of members of that class as against one another), but from the freedom of the Western liberals (which was freedom for the *bourgeoisie* carefully conditioned in the sense of Mill's classical exposition). Bakunin's conception of freedom was in its ultimate analysis extreme individualism. It was the logical conclusion of the romantic doctrine; and it was a conclusion well

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 343-51; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 276; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxvi. 302.

suited to a temperament which shrank from no extreme and found its natural outlet in individual self-assertion. Bakunin was, in theory, the most fanatical advocate of freedom, and the most complete individualist, who ever lived.¹

Individualism remains the essence of Bakunin's social and political system and of his opposition to Marx. His thought is not perfectly consistent, even in the years after 1867, when it underwent no substantial change. In one passage he rejects free will, and declares that vice and virtue are "the absolute product of the combined action of nature and society" (though the introduction of the word "nature" seems to beg the issue). Generally speaking, he accepts Rousseau's hypothesis that man, if unperturbed by social or political authority, is inherently virtuous. The more primitive man is, the more nearly he approximates to this ideal. In the modern world, the most primitive forces are the proletariat and the peasant. These "solid, barbarian elements" are destined to be the saviours of society; and it is significant that he rested his fondest hopes on the least civilised European members of these classes—the Russian peasantry. Like Marx, Bakunin believed that the revolution must come by violence. But while Marx believed in organised revolution led by a trained and disciplined class-conscious proletariat, Bakunin pinned his faith to a peasant *jacquerie* or the spontaneous uprising of an infuriated town mob.

Well then, save France by *anarchy* [he wrote in the autumn of 1870]. Unchain the popular anarchy in country and town, magnify it till it rolls like a raging avalanche devouring and destroying—its enemies and the Prussians alike.

He liked to speak of "these evil passions, these socialist passions", and (particularly at the time of his association with Nechaev) of the end as justifying the means. But if he required justification, it could more logically be found in the thought that, as destruction is also creation, so these "evil passions" are in their essence also good. His aim was, in the words of one observer, to "arouse elemental anger". Yet he himself was the kindest and gentlest of men; and there were moments when he was capable of supreme detachment, even from himself. The revolutionaries, he once assured Postnikov, "do not want blood-

¹ *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 128, 146.

shed, and if they speak about it in print, they merely hope to frighten the monarchy and drive it to concessions".¹

His hostility to the State flows directly from his belief in individual human nature. "All exercise of authority perverts, and all submission to authority humiliates", he said. He regarded the State as the "most flagrant, most cynical, and most complete denial of humanity", on the ground that "every State, like every theology, assumes man to be fundamentally bad and wicked". It was on the basis of his individualism that he joined issue with the communism of Marx. Marx in theory believed (for he, like Bakunin, had passed through the school of the French utopian socialists) that the State would one day disappear. But Bakunin was right in perceiving that the abolition of the State played no vital part in Marx's system. Marx wanted to capture the State machine, not to destroy it. Marx's policy was to "liberate from above"—through the State. Bakunin held that the only true liberation must come "from below"—through the individual. Bakunin sought liberty in destruction and disintegration which, to Marx's orderly mind, seemed midsummer madness. Marx sought it in discipline and integration, which did not seem to Bakunin to be liberty at all. Liberty for Bakunin could not be brought about by the "supreme protective action of the State". He would have applied to Marx's ideal society the words he had once used of Weitling's: "a herd of animals driven together by force, pursuing exclusively material aims, and knowing nothing of the spiritual side of life".²

The corollary of Bakunin's whole-hearted rejection of the State was his rejection of political action as a means of promoting revolution. The failure of 1848 had convinced him that the revolution must be social, not political. Both Marxists and Bakuninists wanted a new social order. But they differed fundamentally over methods.

The communists [wrote Bakunin in his last years] imagine that they can achieve it by the development and organisation of the political power of the working classes, and particularly of the town

¹ Bakunin, *Œuvres*, v. 160; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 283; Bauler, *Byloe* (July 1907), p. 77; Kantor, *V Pogone*, p. 50.

² Bauler, *Byloe* (July 1907), p. 77; Bakunin, *Œuvres*, i. 150, 158; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 298; Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 160; *Sobranie*, ed. Steklov, iii. 223.

proletariat. . . . The revolutionary socialists . . . think, on the other hand, that they can only reach this goal by the development and organisation of the non-political, social, and therefore anti-political power of the working masses in town and country.

Strictly speaking, there was, of course, nothing illogical in using political means to destroy political institutions; and here as elsewhere Bakunin was not perfectly consistent. In 1868, he wrote a letter for a French journal in which he attacked French socialists for an abstention from politics which might easily be interpreted as political cowardice; and some of his closest Italian supporters, including Gambuzzi and Fanelli, became members of the Italian Chamber. But in his own practice, and in his inmost thought, Bakunin never wavered. He believed, with Proudhon, that all systems of government were bad, and should be boycotted until such time as they could be destroyed. Since 1848, *bourgeois* democracy in particular had been anathema to him.¹

Extreme individualism has, however, more than one facet. If it issues on one side in complete anarchism, it points on the other to individual absolutism. Stirner, the philosopher of individualism, ended not as an anarchist, but as a solipsist. It is not sufficient to dismiss as passing aberrations those fantastic dreams indulged in by Bakunin in the Peter-and-Paul fortress and in Siberia—when he offered a revolutionary dictatorship first to the Tsar and then to Muraviev. If representative government was repellent to Bakunin's wilful and imperious nature, absolute dictatorship was correspondingly congenial. He was indeed sincere enough in disclaiming any ambition to fill the rôle of a popular leader.

You tell me [he wrote to Albert Richard] that I can become the Garibaldi of socialism? I care very little to become a Garibaldi and play a grotesque rôle. My dear, I shall die and the worms will eat me, but I want our idea to triumph. I want the masses of humanity to be really emancipated from all authorities and from all heroes present and to come.

But the same confusion is inherent in these ideas as in his conception of the Alliance. For the "masses of humanity", Bakunin preached individual freedom pushed to the extreme of anar-

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 161; *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 145.

chism. For the revolutionary party, he desired "absolute effacement of individuals, of wills, in collective organisation and action"; and in practice, though not in theory, he readily enough conferred on himself the dictatorship of the revolutionary party. Marx could write, with sufficient aptness to score a point, that "anarchy reigns, at any rate, in his head, where there is room for only one clear idea—that Bakunin must play first fiddle"; and the revolt in the International Brotherhood at the beginning of 1869 was palpably provoked by his dictatorial methods. There was thus in Bakunin's system a fundamental inconsistency comparable to the fundamental inconsistency of Marx, who hoped to create a régime of universal love through the medium of class hatred. Bakunin is known to the world as one of the founders of anarchism. It is less often remembered that he was the first originator of the conception of a select and closely organised revolutionary party, bound together not only by common ideals, but by the tie of implicit obedience to an absolute revolutionary dictator.¹

Neither Michael Bakunin nor Karl Marx left at his death any international organisation pledged to apply his revolutionary principles on a world-wide basis; for neither of the dissident "Internationals" into which the parent body split after the Hague Congress survived for more than half a decade. More or less organised, but nowhere powerful, Marxist or Bakunist groups continued to exist in every important European country except Great Britain. It would have been rash to predict whether revolutionaries of the future would hoist the Marxist or the Bakunist flag. But Marx enjoyed a formidable advantage over his rival. He left to his followers a clear and dogmatic body of doctrine. His principal masterpiece was indeed unfinished. But the first volume, which was published in his lifetime, contained the essential part of his teaching; and in Engels he had a competent editor to give literary shape to the notes of the two remaining volumes which he had left behind. Bakunin's teaching must be extracted from a series of articles, essays, and pamphlets, most of them designed for specific occasions or purposes, most of them unfinished, and nearly all of them containing inconsistencies and obscurities which a final revision (if Bakunin had been capable of revising anything) might have

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 259-60; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiv. 241.

removed. Bakunin suffered the fate of those whose influence on their contemporaries depends on the spoken word and on that elusive gift called personality. It was impossible to convey to posterity that sense of overwhelming power which was always present to those who knew him in his life.

Bakunin's influence on subsequent history has been incomparably weaker than that of Marx, and is difficult to assess with any precision. In Russia the name of Bakunin was long held in honour in revolutionary circles. But the Social-Revolutionaries, who divided the socialist movement with the Marxist Social-Democrats, were not Bakuninists. In spirit they were certainly nearer to Bakunin than to Marx; for they attached more importance to heroic impulse than to philosophical theory, and believed that the revolution could be brought about by a select band of determined conspirators. But they did not accept the creed of anarchism; and they advocated—which Bakunin did not—the assassination of monarchs and ministers. The school of Russian theoretical anarchists, of whom Tolstoy and Kropotkin are the most famous representatives, tended to associate anarchism with non-resistance—a doctrine which Bakunin would have held in horror. In Spain, where Bakunin's influence proved more durable than in any other European country, anarchism kept its place as the most effective and explosive revolutionary creed, and was still, on the eve of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, the accepted doctrine of the most powerful wing of the workers' movement. In Italy, the workers' movement continued, for many years after Bakunin's death, to be deeply tinged with anarchism. But the individualist tradition in Italian revolutionary theory finally culminated, not in anarchism, but in revolutionary dictatorship; and if Bakunin has a place in Italian history, it is as one of the obscure ancestors of one aspect of Fascism. An ingenious political theorist might trace a curious affinity between the Fascist State and the "rational" but "iron" dictatorship which Bakunin attributed to Muraviev in Siberia, and argue that the modern clash of proletarian and Fascist dictatorships is the latest expression of the historical struggle between Karl Marx and Michael Bakunin.

The quarrel which broke the First International does, however, represent a more universal issue than the debate between two rival theories of revolution. It is the contrast between

opposite and complementary manifestations of the human spirit. Marx looked at mankind through the eyes of the statesman and administrator. His business was not with the individual, but with the mass. He introduced into revolutionary theory and practice the order, method, and authority which had hitherto been the prerogative of government, and thereby laid the foundation of the disciplined revolutionary State. Bakunin was a visionary and a prophet. His concern was not with the mass but with the individual, not with institutions but with morality. His career was barren of concrete result. "He spent his whole life", said his friend Vyrubov, "playing the part of Sisyphus, continually preparing political and social revolutions, which no less continually collapsed on his shoulders." Yet it is scarcely relevant to speak of his failure to achieve, when the whole idea of achievement was alien to his character and purpose. Reichel once asked him what he would do if he succeeded in realising all his plans and creating everything he had dreamed of. "Then", he replied, "I should at once begin to pull down again everything I had made." Bakunin is one of the completest embodiments in history of the spirit of liberty—the liberty which excludes neither licence nor caprice, which tolerates no human institution, which remains an unrealised and unrealisable ideal, but which is almost universally felt to be an indispensable part of the highest manifestations and aspirations of humanity.¹

¹ Vyrubov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), pp. 48-9; El, *Severnyi Vestnik* (April 1898), p. 179.

BOOK VI

LAST YEARS

“There is one consolation: the nearness of death. The peal has been rung—get out of the belfry.”

BAKUNIN to Ogarev
(November 11th, 1874)

CHAPTER 32

LAST PROJECTS

THE story of Bakunin's personal life has been carried down to the early summer of 1871, when a momentary improvement was visible in his financial circumstances. The improvement was of short duration. Lack of funds prevented the publication of the second instalment of *The Knouto-Germanic Empire*. In October 1871 the despairing mood of the first months of the year reappears in the diary. "Handed over the last ten francs for marketing", runs the entry for October 25th. "Nothing coming in. What is to be done? Balance 3 francs 35 centimes." On November 14th the family had been without meat for two days, and would soon have no candles or firewood. It is evident that these preoccupations loomed far larger at this time in Bakunin's mind than the intrigues against the solidarity of the International which Marx so eagerly attributed to him.

Other domestic anxieties soon asserted themselves. On November 1st, 1871, Antonia received news of the death of her only surviving brother at Krasnoyarsk, and became, according to a note in her husband's diary, "half demented". She conceived an illogical fear for the safety of her parents and sister; and her husband's "last 25 francs" were spent on a telegram to Krasnoyarsk. Presently her grief took the form of an irresistible desire to revisit, after nine years' absence, her distant home and the surviving members of her family. The winter was occupied in plans and preparations. When she left Premukhino for London at the beginning of 1863, she had been required to give a promise that she would not seek to re-enter Russia. But the Russian Government now raised no objections to her journey, its complacency perhaps betokening that it no longer regarded Bakunin as a serious danger. On the last day of June 1872 Antonia left Locarno for Russia with her two children. Bakunin accompanied them as far as Bâle, where, on July 3rd, he bade them farewell. There is a note of emotion in the laconic entry in his diary:

3. Separation; for how long? for a year? for ever? Antonia left for Frankfurt (through ticket to Berlin via Cassel) at 8.45 A.M.

The old man, deprived of his family, could not bear to return to the solitude of Locarno. He settled for the next few months in Zürich, the lake town which had been his first resting-place when he came to Switzerland with Herwegh thirty years before. His present choice of Zürich was due, however, not to sentimental memories, but to reasons which can be briefly explained.¹

The quarrel with Nechaev in the summer of 1870, and the return to Russia six months later of the gallant colonel Postnikov, had left Bakunin completely cut off from his own country. Of his Russian friends in Switzerland, the decrepit Ogarev and the lazy, slow-witted Zhukovsky had been exiles too long to have any knowledge of contemporary Russia. He had not seen Ozerov since the *débâcle* at Lyons; and Zaitsev, one of the younger generation of revolutionaries, who had visited him in the preceding autumn, counted for little. All these belonged to the past; and it seemed that Bakunin would never again have active political contact with men of his own land and speech. But just when hope was almost dead, a fresh group of young Russians entered his life and, in the summer of 1872, drew him once more, after an interval of nearly two years, into the field of Russian revolutionary intrigue.

The most important of these new arrivals, and the one who seemed most likely to fill the void left by Nechaev in Bakunin's heart, was an energetic young man whom he had first met in Geneva in the last days of the Nechaev affair. His real name was Michael Sazhin. But he had been in America and there adopted the *nom de guerre* Armand Ross, under which he was always known to his revolutionary associates. Ross possessed that determination of character and desire to dominate which seemed to exercise a peculiar fascination over Bakunin now that his own energies were abating. A seductive veil of secrecy enveloped all Ross's movements. He would vanish for months on mysterious missions, and return suddenly and without warning from London, from Paris (where he was during the Commune), from

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 228-30, 301; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Draganov, p. 325.

the Balkans, or once even from Russia itself. In the depressing winter of 1871-2 he had been Bakunin's most regular correspondent and a frequent source of petty loans. For the next two and a half years he remained the most powerful individual influence in Bakunin's life.¹

But the immediate impulse to the resumption of Bakunin's Russian activities came from another quarter. In the summer of 1871 two young medical students, Holstein and Oelsnitz, who had been expelled from the University of Petersburg for participation in political demonstrations, settled in Zürich to pursue their studies there. In March 1872 Holstein appeared in Locarno, and paid a visit to the famous revolutionary veteran. In the following month, Oelsnitz, accompanied by another young student named Ralli, who had once been associated with Nechaev and had just served a term of imprisonment in the Peter-and-Paul fortress, came to the neighbouring town of Arona, a few hours' journey down the lake. Oelsnitz and Ralli received, through Holstein, a pressing invitation from Bakunin to visit him; and on April 22nd, 1872, Bakunin's diary records their arrival.²

Bakunin was alone, Antonia and the children having gone on a visit to the Mroczkowskis at Mentone. His solitude made the new-comers doubly welcome; and for nearly a fortnight the trio of young Russians were permanent guests in the house. A slight hitch occurred at the outset. Ralli innocently referred to his association with Nechaev. Bakunin hotly retorted that he must choose between friendship with Nechaev and friendship with him, for the two were incompatible. Ralli, according to his own account, had no particular desire to have anything more to do with Nechaev, of whose methods he did not approve. But he resented Bakunin's ultimatum, and went to bed loudly declaring that he would leave Locarno on the following day. Next morning, however, before he was up, the "colossal form" of Bakunin, flanked by Holstein and Oelsnitz, appeared in his room, and peace was made, the vexed question of Nechaev being apparently left undecided. The sole obstacle was thus removed; and Bakunin enrolled his three visitors in a "newly formed group of

¹ Ross, *Katorga i Ssylka* (1926), No. 5, pp. 10-12, 18; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 325; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 144.

² Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 205-6.

Bakuninist anarchists". He tasted once more half-forgotten delights. He drafted a programme and a constitution, and read them to his admiring audience; and when the guests at length declared that they must depart, the last evening was devoted to making up a secret code for their future communications with one another. It is, needless to say, unprofitable to enquire in what relation this "newly formed group" stood to the Alliance or to the International. Nor is it possible to find much meaning in Ralli's statement that they were regarded by Bakunin as "belonging to his society of International Brothers, with which our comrade Ross was to serve as a connecting link".

Scarcely were Ralli, Holstein, and Oelsnitz gone when another unexpected visitor arrived from Zürich in the person of Hvrčanin, a revolutionary Serb. Not since 1848 had Bakunin given serious thought to the liberation of the Slavs of Turkey. But he was only too willing to listen to so fascinating a stranger and to revive ancient dreams of organising his oppressed Slav brothers in the revolutionary cause. From the Serbs his mind naturally moved on to the Poles, who had their place among his less-distant recollections. There is no record of any Polish visitor to Locarno. But on June 8th, 1872, Bakunin records in his diary that he was composing a "Polish programme". The spirits of the past were being evoked from the vasty deep of Bakunin's memories to shed a deceptive gleam of hope on his declining years. It was only in Zürich that these ambitions could be pursued; and thither, now that Antonia had left him for an indefinite period, he repaired.¹

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At the beginning of the 'seventies the persecution of revolutionaries and radicals in the Russian universities was at its height, and hundreds of Russian students, men and women, fled abroad. Zürich, whose university at this time enjoyed a particularly high repute, rivalled and outstripped Geneva as a haven of refuge for these youthful *émigrés*. The Oberstrasse, near the university, was a "corner of Russia", and more Russian was heard there than any other language. Bakunin's picturesque figure, surmounted for the summer by an expansive broad-brimmed straw hat with a red ribbon, soon became familiar in

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 206-7.

these surroundings. The society of his young compatriots was thoroughly congenial to him. Everywhere he heard the prospects of revolution eagerly canvassed; and the whole atmosphere encouraged his most ambitious hopes. Bakunin had never, like Herzen, despised and rejected the rising generation. He welcomed these young revolutionaries as the worthy successors of the comrades of his own turbulent youth; and he was readily accepted by them as their oracle and example. Shortly after his arrival, he came one day with a band of his followers to dine at a *pension* frequented by impecunious students; and one of those present, a young Russian girl, has left a graphic picture of the atmosphere of hero-worship with which he was surrounded:

The door opened wide, and there appeared the enormous form of Michael Alexandrovich Bakunin. All at once fell silent. The eyes of all were involuntarily riveted on Bakunin. It was so much a matter of habit for him to attract notice that he was not embarrassed by these challenging looks, and advanced the length of the room to his seat with an easy, measured, free gait. The attention of all present was fixed on him; and nobody noticed the numerous suite of Frenchmen, Spaniards, Russians, and Serbs who followed in his wake. . . .

Turning first to one, then to another, he would speak without the least embarrassment, now in German, now in Italian, now in French, now in Spanish. But in the long run Russian got the upper hand. . . . He was in good form to-day, and was recalling his youth, Moscow, his friendship with Belinsky. Everyone listened to his easy, graceful utterance. Not only at his table was there a solemn, rather obsequious, silence; those sitting at our table also remained dumb, though inwardly annoyed with themselves for not having the courage to open their mouths.

Having finished dinner, Bakunin turned to the writer of these reminiscences and asked her permission to smoke. This gesture of old-world courtesy shocked the more advanced members of the company; and Bakunin still further startled his audience by reproaching one of the ladies present for drinking wine. He could not, he declared, bear to see women either drink or smoke. Such things—the last incongruous relics of the Premukhino tradition—these enlightened young people would have tolerated from nobody but Michael Bakunin.¹

Bakunin had perhaps never enjoyed so much prestige and

¹ Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, ii. 51; El, *Severnyi Vestnik* (April 1898), pp. 174-6.

admiration. But none of the grandiose schemes which he had planned came to fruition. During the first part of his stay in Zürich he lodged with the Serb Hvrāčanin; and, three days after his arrival, the diary announces the "foundation of a Slav section". Three years earlier, in the great days of Nechaev, he had received at Geneva a delegation of Bulgarian revolutionaries. In 1870, a Bulgarian named Karavelov was among his visitors at Locarno. But no Bulgarians appear to have been available for the new section; and the largest group of Serbs in Zürich, being Marxists, held aloof. The impulse came only from Bakunin. The programme of the section was entirely from his hand. Ralli estimates the number of "more or less conscious members" at six or seven, and apparently includes himself, Oelsnitz, and Holstein in this tiny number. Even Bakunin did not long retain his illusions about it.

We must have a Slav section, bad as it is [he wrote soon afterwards to Ralli], to serve as a nucleus for our work among the Slavs; and we have to make the best of the material which is ready to our hand in Zürich.

The Slav section, like so many of Bakunin's creations, had no vitality outside his own optimistic imagination. As soon as his presence was withdrawn, it faded away without leaving a trace.¹

Bakunin's dealings with the Poles were equally unsuccessful, though for a different reason. There was already in Zürich a fairly active Polish Social-Democratic society, the secretary of which was one Adolf Stempkowski, a sign-painter. Bakunin thought it would be a magnificent idea to transform this society into a section of the Fédération Jurassienne and of the International, and drafted a new programme for it on Bakunist lines. He encouraged the foundation of a Polish journal, to which he would of course be a contributor. He even wrote an article for it, which he headed, with a fine gesture of indifference, "Call it what you will", and which opened in a style worthy of the great days of 1847 and 1863:

Aristocratic Poland has perished irretrievably. Popular, peasant,

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 301; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 249, 499-503; Ralli, *Minuvshie Gody* (October 1908), pp. 158-9; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 223-31. The rather inconclusive evidence regarding Bakunin's contacts with Bulgarian revolutionaries is collected by Volkov, *Christo Botev* (Sofia, 1921).

working-man Poland will rise from the dead. . . . But she can be freed not by a revolt of the nobility, but by a peasant revolution, a general rising of all the toiling masses.

Unfortunately the same inherent difficulties which had sterilised his first contact with Poland in 1847, and poisoned his efforts in the Polish insurrection of 1863, recurred with the stubborn remorselessness of fundamental historical facts. The Poles of Zürich were no more disposed than the Poles of Paris or the Poles of London and Stockholm to bury "aristocratic Poland", or to apply the rules of class-warfare to the liberation of Poland. When Bakunin denied those "historical rights" which were the basis of Polish claims to the Ukraine, to White Russia, and to Lithuania, and declared that "Poland exists only where the people recognises itself as, and wishes to be, Polish", they felt it was time to protest. The new journal appeared, but failed to print either Bakunin's article or his programme. Bakunin and his three lieutenants not only withdrew from the society, but demanded the return of the 60 francs which they had contributed to it; and the affair ended in mutual recrimination. Bakunin learned for the third and last time the lesson that Polish nationalism and world revolutions make uneasy bed-fellows. The Polish question, like the question of the Slavs of Turkey, disappeared for ever from his thoughts.¹

In the middle of August 1872 the life of the Slav colony in Zürich was punctuated by a dramatic event. Nechaev, who had not been publicly heard of for two years, was discovered in Zürich by the Swiss police and arrested. He had been betrayed by the Pole Stempkowski, who turned out to be in the pay of the Russian Government. Three months later Bakunin related to Ogarev that he had himself learned of Nechaev's presence in Zürich and had warned him through an intermediary to leave the town, since the police were on his track. Nechaev contemptuously remarked that "the Bakuninists were trying to drive him away from Zürich", ignored the warning, and remained in his fool's paradise until the police came and took him. At the moment of the arrest Bakunin was about to start for La Chaux-de-Fonds, where a conference of the Fédération Jurassienne was to elect its delegates for the Hague Congress and draft their

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, 332-40.

instructions. He stopped on the way at Berne, and pleaded with Gustav Vogt, now a member of the Federal Council, to prevent Nechaev's extradition. The plea failed. Already two years before, the Swiss authorities had made up their minds that Nechaev was a criminal, not a political refugee; and at the end of October he was handed over to Russia. His fate, so like that which Bakunin himself had once suffered, touched the old man's heart.

Nobody [he wrote to Ogarev] has done me, and deliberately done me, so much harm as he, and yet I am sorry for him. He was a man of rare energy; and when you and I first met him, there burned in him a clear flame of love for our poor down-trodden people, he had a genuine ache for the people's age-long suffering. . . . Well, he's done for.

Nechaev stood his trial at Petersburg in a mood of unbending defiance, and died ten years later in the Peter-and-Paul fortress.¹

While Nechaev's fate still hung in the balance, news reached Zürich of the decisions of the Hague Congress. They cannot have been altogether unexpected. But the expulsion of Bakunin and Guillaume and the condemnation of the Alliance demanded some dramatic counter-stroke; and the Bakuninist forces began to assemble at Zürich. Several Italians from the Rimini Congress were already there; and on September 11th, 1872, the four Spanish delegates arrived from The Hague. Discussion occupied the next three days. Bakunin indefatigably noted in his diary the foundation of yet another "secret international organisation" and the adoption of statutes, doubtless drafted by himself. But the public business was to be done at a congress which had been convened for September 15th at Saint-Imier in the Jura, and which would be attended by Guillaume and Schwitzguébel.

The congress duly met on the appointed date. The party from Zürich comprised, besides Bakunin himself, five Italians and the four Spaniards. The other delegates were Guillaume and Schwitzguébel for the Jura, and three French refugees, one of whom mysteriously represented two American sections of the International. The delegates unanimously rejected the decisions of the Hague Congress, and constituted themselves into a free union of federations of the International, bound together, not by

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 340-41; Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 316; iii. 53; Kantor, *V Pogone*, pp. 97-103.

any bureaucratic organisation like the General Council, but by "a pact of friendship, solidarity, and mutual defence". They boldly declared that "the destruction of all political power is the first duty of the proletariat", and proceeded to pass a number of resolutions elaborating this basic principle. The dissident anarchist International was thus well and truly founded. Bakunin's hand is clearly visible in the resolutions. But there was no debate; and the proceedings were formal and uninspiring. By the second evening it was all over. The visitors returned by easy stages to Zürich, whence the Italians and Spaniards departed for their homes.¹

But Bakunin, whose sensitiveness to personal attack increased with the years, had not yet finished with the Hague Congress. The charge of the appropriation of other people's property by fraud was one which could not be left unanswered. On his return to Zürich from Saint-Imier, he assembled his Russian friends and helped them to draft a declaration of protest for the vindication of his honour. The declaration recalled the long campaign of "Marxist calumny" which had been systematically waged against him since his return from Siberia. Of this campaign the present charge was evidently the culmination. The signatories were prevented by the "unfortunate situation" in which Nechaev now found himself from discussing the details of the new charge against Bakunin. But they were convinced that every honest man would be disgusted by "so gross an intrigue and so flagrant a violation of the most elementary principles of justice", and that in Russia, at any rate, "Bakunin is too highly esteemed and too well known to be assailed by calumny". This declaration was signed by Ralli, Oelsnitz, and Holstein, by another Russian living in Zürich named Smirnov, and by Ross, who came specially from Lausanne for the purpose. It was then sent to Geneva for the signatures of Ogarev, Ozerov, and Zaitsev; and on October 4th, 1872, it was despatched to the journal *Liberté* of Brussels, which had published the resolutions of the Hague Congress. It was also printed in the monthly *Bulletin* of the Fédération Jurassienne.²

Nor was Bakunin's passion for self-vindication yet satisfied. In the slanderous attack conducted against him by "Marx,

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 1-10.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 12-13.

Utin, and their whole German-Jewish company", the insinuation had more than once been made that he had dipped his fingers into the Bakhmetiev fund. Marx had written to Engels, and presumably believed, that he had secured from Herzen's estate "propaganda funds amounting to about 25,000 francs a year". Bakunin now drafted a declaration, which he begged Ogarev to sign in the presence of witnesses, that he, Ogarev, had handed over the Bakhmetiev fund to Nechaev, that no part of it had passed through Bakunin's hands, and that Bakunin had not even been present when Nechaev received it. The last statement was flatly untrue. But Bakunin's memory worked imperfectly when his righteous indignation was aroused; and Ogarev could no longer be regarded as a responsible person. The draft declaration in Bakunin's handwriting, with Ogarev's signature attached, remained among Ogarev's papers. There is nothing to show whether another signed copy was sent to Bakunin or, if so, whether any use was made of it.

The protest of his Russian friends was the last public act of Bakunin's sojourn in Zürich. A week later he returned to Locarno for the winter. He was too old and too tired for the life of a political campaigner; and Locarno was quieter, warmer, and cheaper than Zürich. But this time, though he did not know it, withdrawal to the little lake town on the Italian border meant his effective retirement from the political arena. The Marxist International was dead. The alternative organisation which had issued from the Saint-Imier Congress was still-born. His last Polish experiment had been worse than a fiasco. His "Slav section" was scarcely even a farce. For a year longer he refused to throw in his hand, and struggled on with a pretence of feverish activity in the revolutionary cause. But this last year brought him nothing but bitterness and futility.¹

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From October 1872 to September 1873 Bakunin lived uneventfully in Locarno, lodging first at the Albergo del Gallo, and later, when Zaitsev and his family settled in Locarno, in the lower storey of a house rented by them. He resumed, then abandoned again, his work on the second instalment of *The*

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, pp. 341-3; Marx-Engels, *Sochineniya*, xxiv. 310.

Knouto-Germanic Empire. He corresponded at enormous length with Spanish and Italian disciples, and received frequent visits from the latter. But his interest still centred mainly in Russian affairs; and he continued from Locarno to direct the operations of his lieutenants in Zürich. He had not long retired from Zürich when there arrived in the town a noted Russian *émigré*, Peter Lavrov. Lavrov, who was now in his fiftieth year, was a professor of mathematics. He had been exiled from Petersburg in 1867 as a dangerous radical, and three years later had fled abroad, settling in Paris. Lavrov was a liberal rather than a revolutionary. His opinions, like those of Herzen, were marked by a well-bred eclecticism and dislike of extreme courses. He lacked Herzen's literary genius. But his principal ambition was to emulate Herzen as a publicist, and to found a journal which should succeed *The Bell* as the organ of enlightened Russian opinion. In the summer of 1870, when Michael had for a brief moment dreamed of reviving *The Bell* on his own account, there had been unsuccessful negotiations for Lavrov's participation. Having learned that Zürich was now the home of a large and politically active Russian colony, Lavrov came thither in November 1872 to explore the ground.

Lavrov soon discovered that the name on the lips of every young Russian in Zürich at this time was that of Michael Bakunin. His own orderly instincts were far removed from any taint of anarchism. But once already he had redrafted his programme to meet the objections of those who found it not sufficiently radical; and there seemed no reason why he should not come to terms with the influential Bakuninists in Zürich. The particulars of the negotiations which followed cannot now be disentangled from the contradictory reports of Ross, Ralli, and Lavrov himself. Telegrams went to and fro between Zürich and Locarno; and in December, Ross visited Bakunin to discuss the terms of collaboration with Lavrov. Both sides seem to have been ready to compromise, at any rate in words, on the policy of the journal. But no accommodation could be reached on the more crucial question of its management. Lavrov was looking for assistants and contributors, not partners. Ross demanded, as the price of Bakunist support, a place on the editorial board. On this point compromise was out of the question; and on December 19th, 1872, Bakunin noted

with satisfaction in his diary: "Good letter from Ross: rupture with Lavrov".¹

Notwithstanding this disappointment, Lavrov succeeded in starting his journal, the first number of which appeared in April 1873; and the young Russians of Zürich were split into rival factions of Bakuninists and Lavrovists. The quarrel raged round the possession of a library of Russian books. Bakunin followed the fortunes of war with passionate interest from Locarno, and in February 1873 wrote Ralli a letter in which he hinted that the Lavrovist party consisted mainly of Jews, Asiatics, spies, and "such-like suspicious personages". As for Lavrov himself, Bakunin had formerly thought him an ass; now he regarded him as a swine. In April a hot-headed and bibulous young Bakuninist named Sokolov came to blows with Smirnov, once a disciple of Bakunin, but now Lavrov's secretary. A public scandal ensued. The majority of the Russian colony in Zürich took Smirnov's side, and there was talk of petitioning the authorities to expel the unruly Bakuninists from the canton. Bakunin, summoned in haste by Ross, came to Zürich and paid a visit to Lavrov, who was living in Smirnov's flat. According to Ross, who was not present, there were recriminations over the non-participation of the Bakuninists in Lavrov's journal, and Bakunin taunted Lavrov with the "elasticity" of his mind. The meeting between the nominal leaders of the adverse factions seems temporarily to have allayed the rivalry. But it could produce no feelings of friendship between two beings so antipathetic to each other as Lavrov and Bakunin. Lavrov's learned self-satisfaction was not likely to be impressed by Bakunin's fiery, disordered rhetoric. Bakunin thought Lavrov a pompous and tedious pedant.²

The final collapse of the Bakuninist party in Zürich was due, however, not to the hostility of the Lavrovists, but to internal dissensions. Bakunin's withdrawal to Locarno in the autumn of 1872 was the signal for an outbreak of jealous rivalry between his principal lieutenants. Ross seems at this time to have enjoyed Bakunin's unlimited confidence. His force of character was combined with a strong admixture of personal ambition, and he

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 52-4; Ross, *Katorga i Ssyłka* (1926), No. 5, 14-15; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 233, 244-52.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, pp. 80-81; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 252-9.

considered himself entitled, in Bakunin's absence, to act and issue orders in his name. The other members of the group, who submitted without question to Bakunin's authority, were not prepared to bow the knee to Ross as his satrap. Bakunin, apprised of the situation, wrote soothing letters to Ralli, the leader of the revolt; and, early in March 1873, Ralli was summoned to Locarno. When he arrived he was told that the "Russian branch of the International Brotherhood" (the terminology is as usual fluctuating and void of precise meaning) was to be reorganised. It was henceforth to consist of Bakunin himself, of an anarchist freshly arrived from Russia named Lermontov, of Ross, and of Ralli. Holstein and Oelsnitz, being more interested in medicine than in revolution, were to be relegated to a "second category". Lermontov was to return to Russia and carry on the work there. Ralli was to act as liaison officer with the "elements" in Zürich.¹

This rather naïve attempt to retain Ralli's allegiance by promoting him, or allowing him to think that he had been promoted, to the inner hierarchy of the movement delayed, but did not prevent, its disruption. Lermontov, having returned to Russia, soon washed his hands of his associates in Switzerland. Ross, he declared, was treacherous, vain, and selfish. Ralli, Holstein, and Oelsnitz were unfit for revolutionary work. The "old man" himself, though his past entitled him to respect, was now wholly under the influence of Ross. Meanwhile, in Zürich, a printing press set up by the group became a bone of contention, the trio alleging that Ross had refused them access to it. At the beginning of August 1873, Oelsnitz sent Bakunin on their joint behalf a letter which amounted to an ultimatum. It was a sad dilemma for the old man. In his more vigorous and temperamental days, he would have raged and stormed and dealt blow for blow. Now in his declining years he was covetous of the blessings of peace, and the mild resignation of his answer astonished his friends.

You have put the question clearly [he wrote to Oelsnitz]. You, Ralli, and Holstein will have nothing further to do with Ross. You warn me that any further effort on my part would be useless, and ask me to choose between him and you. In inviting me to make such

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 502; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 231-4.

a choice, you have doubtless foreseen my answer. I cannot and will not separate from Ross. . . . But since a rupture between you and me has become inevitable, let us prevent it as far as possible from being harmful to our common cause; for we still remain servants of the same cause, with the same programme and the same goal.¹

But the rupture was not achieved so easily. Ralli and his friends formed a new group calling itself the "Revolutionary Commune of Russian Anarchists". Having obtained the use of another printing press, they issued a manifesto which reproduced almost textually Bakunin's programme of the International Brotherhood. The manifesto contained, as Oelsnitz afterwards apologetically explained, nothing but the "pure principles of anarchism and collectivism". But Bakunin felt that the secessionists had stolen his thunder and, egged on by Ross, he branded their action by the harsh name of treason. In September 1873 there was a bitter meeting at Berne, whither Bakunin had gone on a visit; and the dispute petered out in a sordid argument about financial obligations which dragged on for months. The new group, which was joined by Bakunin's old friend Zhukovsky as well as by most of the Bakuninists in Zürich, continued to flourish for some years as the most important centre of Russian anarchist propaganda. Bakunin, deserted by all but the domineering Ross, remained helpless and isolated—a man without a party. His name was still held in awe by his young compatriots; but his active share in the Russian revolutionary movement had come to an end.²

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The primary purpose of Bakunin's visit to Berne, which lasted the whole of September and part of October, was to consult his friend Adolf Vogt, who had for some time been his unofficial medical adviser. In May 1873 Bakunin had entered his sixtieth year. His once powerful organism, sapped by the experiences of five prisons, was no longer equal to the demands placed on it by his disorderly mode of life and undiminished zest in the pleasures of the table. Since he came to live in Italian

¹ *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, p. 502; Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 94-5; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 234-8.

² *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, 504-11; Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 141-2; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 238-44.

Switzerland, he had supplemented his favourite dish of beef-steak with a local macaroni or risotto cooked in a generous bath of fat. Even in the last months of his life, he could get through a whole tin of sardines by way of a *hors d'œuvre*, helping himself with a spoon and swallowing them two at a time, tails and all. His figure swelled to enormous dimensions. His appearance and gait were alike elephantine. He derived more than a spice of enjoyment from the sensation which he never failed to provoke as he moved about the streets of the little town, and liked to have a crowd of urchins following him with cries of "*Evviva Michele!*" The iron-grey hair still strayed over his imposing forehead, and the grey-blue eyes had not lost their penetrating brilliance. But beneath them hung heavy pouches of skin, and the whole face was flabby and swollen. Years ago there had been symptoms of fatty degeneration of the heart, and doctors had prescribed strychnine and nux vomica. Now visitors noticed that he panted heavily at the slightest exertion, and that when he stooped down to put on his boots he went blue in the face. Since Antonia's departure, the irregularity of his life had increased. Chronic asthma deprived him of sleep, and he preferred to sit all night drinking coffee, vodka, and punch with his friends rather than face the torment of lying in bed. It was unlikely that Adolf Vogt's prescriptions could do much to relieve ills so deeply rooted in his constitution and his character.¹

The state of his health was, however, not the only matter on which Bakunin wished to consult Vogt. The arrest and extradition of Nechaev in the previous autumn had visibly shaken his nerves. The man who in 1849, and once more in 1863, had shown a foolhardy readiness to thrust his neck into the noose, now began to conjure up imaginary terrors. He persuaded himself that there was a real danger of the Swiss authorities handing him over to the Russian police to spend his last years in a Russian prison. The only way to dispel this fear once and for all and to give him a permanent and secure resting-place on the face of the earth was to acquire Swiss citizenship; and it was important to enlist the support of people like the Vogts, who stood well in official circles in Berne. They would serve as his protectors if danger threatened, and as his sponsors when the

¹ Arnoud, *Nouvelle Revue* (August 1891), p. 593; Vyrubov, *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1913), p. 59; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 302-7.

time was ripe to enrol himself as a citizen of the Swiss Confederation.

It was a natural counterpart of Bakunin's desire to obtain security for himself that he should cease to disturb the security of others by his fiery propaganda. It was doubtless on Vogt's advice that he decided at this time to make a formal declaration of his retirement from the political struggle. His active career had virtually come to an end with the fiasco of Lyons and Marseilles in the autumn of 1870. His long duel with Marx had culminated in the schism of the International. His Russian, Slav, and Polish intrigues of the past year in Zürich had all suffered irretrievable shipwreck. There remained, it was true, two countries where he still retained some credit and where revolution might yet blaze out: Spain and Italy. In this very summer of 1873 he had thought of a visit to Spain—a country where he had many followers, but on whose soil he had never set foot. His friends there even collected 1500 francs for the journey. In the old days he would have gone for the price of his ticket. But now he rejected the proffered sum as insufficient, and stayed quietly in Locarno. In Italy his prestige had been enormously enhanced by the break with Marx and the foundation of the anarchist International. Nowhere had he so many disciples; and for socialists throughout the land, Michael Bakunin was the *santo maestro* and a quasi-legendary figure. He even talked at one moment of settling in Malta, which would provide a suitable base for revolutionary activities on the mainland. But the scheme fell through, and Italy itself remained depressingly tranquil. There was no longer any place for Bakunin in the front battle-line of the revolution. It was time for the old warrior to lay down his arms.¹

Once the decision was taken, an opportunity soon occurred of announcing it. In the middle of September 1873 there appeared in London, in French, an anonymous pamphlet entitled *L'Alliance de la démocratie socialiste et l'association internationale des travailleurs*. It was, in the main, the work of Engels and Lafargue, and constituted a defence of the decision of the Hague Congress to expel Bakunin from the International. Copies of it were sent out in advance to the international press;

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 141; Ross, *Golos Minuvshego* (May 1914), p. 202; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iii. 229.

and on September 19th the *Journal de Genève* printed a long résumé of it. Among the documents quoted in it and reproduced by the *Journal de Genève* were several extracts from the pamphlet *How the Revolutionary Question presents Itself*, issued during the partnership between Bakunin and Nechaev in the stirring days of 1869. The republication in a widely read Swiss conservative journal of these indiscretions of a not so distant past was, to say the least, inconvenient and unpropitious to Bakunin's new pose of harmless *bourgeois* respectability. He wrote a long reply which appeared in the *Journal de Genève* of September 26th. It was at once an apologia for the past and a renunciation for the future.

Bakunin began with a frontal attack on Marx, whom he regarded (in substance, not unjustly) as the author of the London pamphlet. Marx, "in his triple capacity as communist, German, and Jew", was his natural enemy and, "while pretending to have an equal hatred for the Russian Government, he has never failed, in his dealings with me, to act in perfect harmony with it". The Hague Congress was a "Marxist falsification". The new publication showed that Marx was ready to "assume the rôle of a police agent, an informer, and a slanderer". Bakunin mentioned with indignation a report published in an earlier issue of the *Journal de Genève* that he was the originator of all the recent revolutionary disturbances in Spain. He referred to the quotations from *How the Revolutionary Question presents Itself*, "to the publication of which I am a stranger", and begged that henceforth he might be credited only with what appeared over his signature. Having thus cleared the ground, Bakunin proceeded as follows:

Shall I confess it? All this has disgusted me profoundly with public life. I have had enough of it and, having passed all my life in the struggle, I am weary of it. I am past sixty; and an affection of the heart, which grows worse with age, makes life more and more difficult for me. Let other and younger men take up the work. For myself, I feel neither the strength nor, perhaps, the confidence which are required to go on rolling Sisyphus's stone against the triumphant forces of reaction. I am therefore retiring from the lists, and ask of my dear contemporaries only one boon: oblivion.

Henceforth I shall trouble no man's repose; and I ask, in my turn, to be left in peace.

This letter created a sensation throughout Switzerland. Few

yet realised the changes worked by the passage of years on the once indomitable old agitator; and many of his best friends believed the letter to be a ruse calculated to mask renewed activity in the revolutionary cause. The *cri de cœur* of the weary veteran was taken for bluff. A few days later, by way of dissipating these illusions, Bakunin wrote a further letter to "my comrades of the Fédération Jurassienne" resigning his membership of the Federation and of the International. The letter was printed in the *Bulletin* of the federation for October 12th, 1873, and the following are some of the principal passages:

I cannot and must not quit public life without addressing to you a last word of gratitude and sympathy. . . .

Your victory, the victory of liberty and of the International against the intrigue of the autocrats is complete. Yesterday, when it still seemed to hang in the balance—though for my part I never doubted it—it would have been inadmissible for anyone to leave your ranks. To-day your victory is a *fait accompli*, and each man recovers his liberty to act as suits his personal convenience.

I avail myself therefore of the moment, my dear comrades, to beg you to accept my resignation as a member of the *Fédération Jurassienne* and of the International. . . .

By birth and personal status, though not by sympathy or inclination, I am merely a *bourgeois*, and the only work I can do in your midst is, therefore, propaganda. I have the conviction that the time has gone by for grand speeches, printed or spoken, on theoretical questions. The last nine years have seen the development within the International of more ideas than are necessary for the salvation of the world, if the world can be saved by ideas; and I defy anyone to invent a new one.

It is no longer a time for ideas, it is a time for action and deed. The most important thing of all to-day is the organisation of the forces of the proletariat itself. If I were young, I should have adopted the life of a working-man and, sharing a life of toil with my brethren, should have participated equally with them in the organisation of the forces of the proletariat. This organisation ought to be the work of the proletariat itself.

But neither my age nor my health permits of this. . . .

I am retiring, then, my dear comrades, full of gratitude towards you and full of sympathy for your great and holy cause—the cause of humanity. I shall continue to follow all your steps with fraternal anxiety, and shall hail with delight each new triumph of your efforts.

Till death, I am yours. . . .

These letters written and despatched, Bakunin had one further

task to perform. He visited a tailor and replenished his wardrobe in a style appropriate to his new rôle as a respectable *bourgeois*. Then, towards the middle of October 1873, he left Berne for Locarno, where new embarrassments awaited the would-be citizen of the Swiss Confederation.¹

¹ *Materiali*, ed. Polonsky, iii. 432-8; Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 142-8; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 333.

CHAPTER 33

BARONATA

WHEN Bakunin had first canvassed the possibility of acquiring Swiss nationality, somebody told him that his chances of success would be increased if he became a house-owner. The suggestion might well have seemed ironical to one who rejected in theory the institution of private property, and who in practice often lacked the wherewithal to procure even the bare necessities of life. But it was taken by Bakunin with surprising seriousness. He began to discuss with his friends the ways and means by which he might become a landed proprietor on Swiss soil; and, in the summer of 1873, a heaven-sent opportunity occurred of realising this unexpected ambition.

Among the enthusiastic disciples of revolution who visited Locarno in 1872 was Carlo Cafiero, the young Italian who had joined the Bakuninist opposition against Mazzini at the Rome Congress in 1871. Cafiero had already fallen completely under Bakunin's spell when his father, a merchant of Barletta, died leaving a substantial fortune to be divided between his sons. Carlo desired nothing better than to utilise this windfall for the benefit of his master in political wisdom; and it was agreed that a house should be purchased in the neighbourhood of Locarno, with Cafiero's money, but in Bakunin's name. The house would serve a double purpose. It would lend the desirable *cachet* of respectability to Bakunin's suspect person, and it would provide a meeting-place and, in time of trouble, a haven of refuge for international revolutionaries. The two objects were, strictly speaking, scarcely compatible. But Bakunin and Cafiero were not sticklers for consistency; and the plan seemed a brilliant device for killing two birds with one stone. In the summer of 1873, while Cafiero was away in Italy, Bakunin selected an old house called Baronata with grounds running down to the lake, on the road from Locarno to Bellinzona; and in August Cafiero reappeared on the scene and paid over the purchase money. In the first child-like excitement of their new acquisition, Bakunin

and Cafiero discovered that the existing house was inadequate for their requirements. It did not contain sufficient rooms to shelter the bevy of revolutionaries who might be expected to congregate there. Its thick walls gave it a gloomy, fortress-like appearance; and there was a general air of dilapidation and damp. The enthusiastic purchasers hesitated for a time between reconstructing the existing premises and building a new house in a higher part of the grounds. The more grandiose alternative was decided on. Mroczkowski, who had opportunely arrived on a visit with the Princess, drew plans; and when Bakunin left at the beginning of September 1873, to visit Vogt in Berne, an Italian revolutionary named Nabruzzi (Cafiero himself having returned to Italy) was left in charge of the building operations.¹

The tragi-comedy of Baronata begins with Bakunin's return from Berne in the middle of October. Nabruzzi had installed on the premises what Bakunin called his "Holy Family", consisting of his mother and a young lady of doubtful reputation and origin, as well as two Italian and two Spanish revolutionaries. The function of Nabruzzi, as interpreted by himself, was to keep a faithful record of the expenditure, but not to limit it. The patrimony of Cafiero was at this time still regarded by all concerned, not excluding Cafiero himself, as inexhaustible; and any attempt at economy was therefore superfluous, and even ridiculous. The female camp-followers took themselves off on Bakunin's arrival. But other forms of extravagance were freely indulged in. It was contemplated that Baronata would be self-supporting, and maintain its inmates on the produce of the soil. More than 5000 francs were spent on planting fruit trees; and other purchases included two cows, two horses, a carriage, a cart, and a boat. The cows required the services of a milk-maid. The acquisition of the horses entailed not only the hiring of a groom, but the rebuilding of an ancient stable and coach-house. The carriage and cart necessitated the construction of a road, which cost 6000 francs. Finally, it was decided that the amenities of the property would be enhanced by an artificial lake; and Bakunin pondered on the advantages of excavating an underground refuge with secret passages for escape. There is no reliable account of the actual expenditure on Baronata. But 50,000 francs appear to have been disposed of when, in April

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 96-102, 181.

1874, Cafiero produced a further instalment of the same magnitude, and Bakunin cheerfully assured him that this would be amply sufficient to last till July.¹

Several circumstances combined to hasten and aggravate the *dénouement* of this fantastic enterprise. Bakunin still thought with tenderness of the absent Antonia. He had never reconciled himself to the thought of permanent separation from her. The acquisition of Baronata provided him with a worthy home to offer her, and he more than once told Cafiero (with the somewhat naïve assumption that Cafiero would share his delight) that he was "preparing a paradise for Antonia". His magnanimity (at Cafiero's expense) went still further. Lest Antonia should be unwilling to desert her aged parents, he proposed that they should join the group. The position was highly equivocal. The conditions in which Baronata had been acquired were still a secret to all but two or three persons. The world at large, and Antonia with it, was encouraged to believe that Bakunin had at last received his heritage from his brothers, and that Baronata had been bought with the proceeds. Reassured by this supposed windfall, Antonia, who had given birth to a third child shortly after her arrival in Siberia, consented to rejoin her husband. In October 1873, Bakunin sent her 2000 francs (taken, of course, from Cafiero's money) for the expenses of the journey; and when these were so long on the way that they were given up for lost, a further 4000 francs were despatched. Antonia received both sums in the spring of 1874; and at the end of May, accompanied by her three children, her parents, and her married sister, Sofia Losowska, she set out on the long pilgrimage from Krasnoyarsk to Locarno.²

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In the meanwhile a change had occurred in Cafiero's fortunes. During his visits to Locarno in the past winter he had fallen in love with Olympia Kutuzov, the sister-in-law of Bakunin's friend Zaitsev. In the spring of 1874, Olympia travelled to Russia to see her dying mother; and when she wanted to return, the Russian authorities, apprised of her dealings with revolutionaries, refused to renew her passport. Only one expedient re-

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 102, 181-3; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 332.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 198-9, 203.

mained. Cafiero journeyed to Petersburg, married Olympia and, having thus made her an Italian subject, brought her back with him to Locarno. They arrived at the beginning of July; and about the same time Ross, who had spent the last six months in London, also appeared on the scene. Bakunin had profited by Cafiero's absence to buy an adjacent piece of ground. It was, he explained, well wooded, and the timber alone was worth the price. In the discussion which followed, Ross (if we may believe his account) for the first time drew the attention of his two friends to the enormous expenditure in which Baronata had involved them. Bakunin calculated that yet another 50,000 francs would be required to complete the work and to keep Baronata going during the two years which must elapse before it eventually became self-supporting; and Cafiero, nothing daunted, departed to complete the liquidation of the paternal estate.¹

The stage was thus set for the final act of the Baronata drama. In the first days of July, Gambuzzi met Antonia and her party at Vienna and conducted them to Milan. Ross was sent to Milan to attend them on the last stage of their journey, and they reached Locarno on July 13th, 1874. It was just over two years since Bakunin bade farewell to his wife in Bâle and wondered in his diary whether the separation would be for a year or for ever. There were illuminations and a fire-work display at Baronata the same evening to welcome the travellers; and while these festivities were in progress Cafiero and his wife arrived back from Barletta.

Events now moved rapidly. On the way from Vienna to Milan Gambuzzi had related to Antonia, not perhaps without a certain secret satisfaction, the rumours current in Italy that Bakunin had taken advantage of Cafiero's youth and inexperience to rob him of his patrimony and to ruin him. On the morrow of her arrival Antonia, still convinced that Baronata had been purchased with money received from Premukhino, recounted these rumours with becoming indignation to her husband. Bakunin went straight to Cafiero and begged him, in the presence of Ross, to deny these infamous insinuations. Cafiero promised, and said no more that day. But next morning, July 15th, he came to Bakunin and explained, with a wry face,

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 187, 198; Ross, *Golos Minuvshago* (May 1914), p. 203.

that the rumours were not altogether devoid of foundation, since he was in fact a ruined man. The final proceeds of his father's estate, far from being inexhaustible, amounted to the comparatively modest sum of 100,000 francs. The greater part of it had already been squandered, and he was neither willing nor able to spend a penny more on Baronata. Embittered by the thought of his lost fortune, he reproached his partner in folly with the imprudence of their joint enterprise. "He threw off the mask of friendship", noted Bakunin in his diary, "and broke into an insulting tirade."¹

It was a crushing blow for Bakunin. The loss of Baronata and the abandonment of his grandiose dreams were bitter enough. But far more bitter was his situation *vis-à-vis* Antonia. He did not know how to break the news to her. He had induced her to come all the way from Siberia with her family to rejoin him on the plea that he had now a home and an income to offer her and that her future was secure. In fact, he was as homeless and as penniless as at the gloomiest moments of his career. He brooded over the situation in agonised silence for ten days. Then he decided that he could not honourably retain even the nominal ownership of Baronata in the changed conditions; and on July 25th (perhaps under pressure from Ross, who definitely sided with Cafiero) he signed an act making over the property to Cafiero "with all it contained, including the cows and the sick horses". But he still dared not tell Antonia, who lived on in the fool's paradise of Baronata, installing her family and possessions and making plans for the future. "The days following the 15th", Bakunin wrote a fortnight later, "were a veritable hell."²

There was only one way out. Bakunin "resolved to die"; and the chance of making an heroic death presented itself to him as a heaven-sent escape from an impossible situation. The liquidation of Baronata was not the sole object of Cafiero's present stay in Locarno. He had been charged by his Italian friends with the purchase of dynamite for use in a rising which was to start at Bologna early in August and spread all over Italy. A store of dynamite was, in fact, bought in Switzerland by Ross and smuggled into Italy by Olympia Cafiero, who sewed it into a

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 199; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 341-5.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 200; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 346.

scarf wound round her body. Bakunin was privy to these schemes, and may indeed have participated in their inception. He now announced his intention of going in person to Bologna to take part in the insurrection. At the eleventh hour his courage seems to have failed him, and in a moment of weakness he confided to his friend Bellerio that he was going against his will. But in the long run he preferred anything to the prospect of having to face Antonia with the true story of Baronata. He deceived her once more even now; for he told her he was going to visit his friends in Zürich. She had no inkling of the Italian expedition till it was all over. On July 27th, 1874, exactly a fortnight after the fire-work display which had celebrated Antonia's arrival, Bakunin left Baronata and Locarno in the company of Ross for Italy. They travelled by the Splügen pass—"snowy Splügen", where twenty years earlier Tennyson had "plucked a daisy" and written a poem about it. It was a round-about route. But it was necessary at all costs to avoid recognition by the police.

Bakunin and his companion stayed for two days at the inn in Splügen waiting for a conveyance to take them over the frontier; and here he wrote the long account of the Baronata affair which, supplemented by the occasional testimony of other witnesses, has been the source of the foregoing narrative. It was entitled *A Justificatory Memoir written principally for my poor Antonia*. He posted it to Bellerio, requesting him to give it to Cafiero and to ask the latter to hand it, when he had read it, to Antonia. A few phrases from it have already been quoted. Its concluding paragraphs ran as follows:

All night on the way from Locarno to Bellinzona and from Bellinzona to Splügen, I naturally did not sleep a wink and was thinking of Cafiero. The result of my thoughts is that I can accept nothing further from Cafiero, not even his promise to look after my family when I am dead. I cannot, I will not deceive Antonia any longer. Her dignity, her pride will tell her what to do. The blow to her will be terrible, but I count on the energy and heroism of her character which will sustain her—or so I firmly hope. I have done all in my power to assure, at any rate in part, the future of my family. I have written a letter, a last farewell, to my brothers, who have never denied my right to a part of the estate which we own in common. They have always asked me, in order to realise this part, to send them some one who enjoys my confidence and has full powers to

receive payment for me. Hitherto I had not found such a person. Now by the enclosed letters I confer these full powers on Sofia, Antonia's sister. I could not place them in better hands. She is determined and clever and her devotion to Antonia is unbounded.

And now, my friends, it only remains for me to die. Adieu. . . .

Antonia, do not curse me, forgive me. I shall die blessing you and our dear children.

From Splügen, Bakunin also wrote to Guillaume to bid him farewell as he "was leaving for Italy to take part in a struggle from which he did not expect to come out alive". He probably did not remember that the last letter he had written to his old friend was one announcing his intention to retire from revolutionary activity and urging Guillaume to do likewise. He crossed the frontier safely and reached Bologna on July 30th, 1874. He did not expect, and scarcely wished, to return.

In Bologna Ross left him. "Caddish behaviour on the part of Ross", noted Bakunin in the diary. "I send him to the devil." Already before they left Locarno, he felt that Ross had gone over to the side of Cafiero; and there must have been some quarrel at Bologna, of which no record has survived. It is possible that Bakunin resented being left alone among the Italian revolutionaries, most of whom he scarcely knew. It is more likely that the dispute turned on finance, and that Bakunin had expected to be supplied by Ross with funds, which were not forthcoming. The quarrel was bitter and lasting; and during the next few months *canaille* is the term most frequently applied in Bakunin's diary to his former friend.¹

Bakunin lodged secretly for more than a week in Bologna under the name of Tamburini, a "well-to-do, invalid, and deaf *rentier*". His identity remained undetected by the police, and his rooms served as a meeting-place for the principal conspirators. The coup was timed to take place on the night of August 7th-8th. The Bolognese revolutionaries were to muster at two points beyond the city walls, and were there to be joined by revolutionaries from other parts of Italy. The combined forces were to march into Bologna at two o'clock in the morning by two different gates and seize various points of vantage, including the arsenal. It was hoped that, by daybreak, the whole city would be in their hands.

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 200-204; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 365.

Everything in this carefully laid plot miscarried. On the night of August 5th, one of the principal organisers, a young man named Costa, was arrested by the police. When the time came, the reinforcements from other towns fell short of the numbers promised and expected. The Bolognese who had appeared at the appointed meeting-places took fright. The majority dispersed and went home. The more timorous or more notorious fled to the mountains, hoping to escape into Switzerland. The only result of the whole abortive attempt was to open the eyes of the police to the dangers which had menaced law and order in Bologna. Bakunin, sitting alone and waiting through the fatal night, realised that the attempt was a failure, thought of suicide, and loaded his revolver. But he allowed himself to be dissuaded from the decisive step; and three days later his Italian friends smuggled him out of the country by the way he had come.

Shepherded by one of the Italian revolutionaries, he travelled from Bologna to Verona and from Verona to Splügen in the guise of an aged and infirm country priest. He had shaved his head and put on dark glasses, and walked heavily on a stick, carrying on his arm a basket of eggs. Before leaving Bologna, he sent a short letter to Bellerio:

My friend and brother, it is with terror that I ask you for news of Antonia and her father. Tell her that of all the torments which assail me, the cruellest is the thought of having left her in so painful a situation. But I had no choice. After reading my long letter [*i.e.* the *Justificatory Memoir*] you will have said, like me, that I had no alternative.

The journey proved uneventful and the travellers were not molested. On August 14th, 1874, Bakunin reached Splügen and telegraphed the news of his arrival to Locarno.¹

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The situation at Baronata in Bakunin's absence had been tense and embittered. His departure snapped the only link between his wife and her family on the one side and his political associates on the other; and the two parties had free rein to indulge their mutual antipathy. There was much in the circumstances of Bakunin's marriage to shock and bewilder his friends. But there must have been something also in Antonia's

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 204-6.

enigmatic personality to account for the deep, instinctive resentment which she inspired in them. Herzen had received her, when she first came to London, with suspicion and disdain. Guillaume, who met her only once, and who was ready enough to find excuses for Bakunin's "excessive and unreflecting kindness of heart", has no good word for Antonia. Cafiero was sullenly hostile; Bellerio did not raise a finger to help her; and Ross was her implacable enemy. Antonia was indifferent to the revolutionary cause. She had always diverted from it—or so his friends felt—a certain share of Bakunin's attention; and now vast funds from Cafiero's purse, which should have been expended in the service of the revolution, had gone to build "a paradise for Antonia". She had not, even in the marital sense of the word, been faithful to her husband, and the good-natured toleration which she accorded to him did not compare with the tender warmth she reserved for Gambuzzi. But these reasons, legitimate as they were, do not tell the complete story. It was the whole attitude of Antonia, chill, disdainful, and disapproving, towards everything which was not her own family, which called out the remorseless hatred felt for her by Bakunin's political associates.¹

The position of the unfortunate woman at this moment was indeed tragic. If Bakunin, having brought her and her family from Siberia to Locarno on false pretences, thought of her with reason as the chief and innocent victim of the Baronata *imbroglio*, his comrades regarded her as the principal culprit, and were unlikely to lose any opportunity of venting their spleen on her. Deceived by her husband and detested by his friends, Antonia went on living, for a fortnight after his departure, in her fool's paradise—in a house which she alone still believed to be her husband's property, and where everyone else treated her as an interloper. The dramatic possibilities of the situation soon developed.

The *Justificatory Memoir* was received by Bellerio on July 30th. Some obscure impulse led him to make a copy of it; and it was this copy which was found among Antonia's papers long after the original (which never reached her) had been destroyed. Bellerio handed the original to Cafiero with Bakunin's request that he should pass it on to Antonia. Having read the document,

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 203; Bauler, *Byloe* (July 1907), p. 77; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 342-3.

Cafiero refused point-blank to comply with the request. His excuse was that the document contained references to revolutionary activities which could not properly be divulged to an uninitiated stranger like Antonia; though in fact Bakunin had been unusually discreet, and nowhere mentioned in the *Memoir* the Italian expedition on which he was about to embark. The question hung fire for several days, while Antonia continued to live in false security at Baronata. Then Bellerio appealed to Ross, who undertook, without showing her the document, to reveal the true state of affairs to the unhappy wife. The only authority for the conversation which followed is Ross himself; and he has left two contradictory accounts, one given to Guillaume in 1904, the other recorded by himself in his reminiscences ten years later. The former is to be preferred on the ground both of priority and of inherent probability and will be followed here. But the details must be regarded as uncertain.

The interview between Antonia and Ross took place on August 6th, 1874, in the presence of Bellerio and in the garden of his house. It began in French for the benefit of Bellerio; but as the speakers became excited, they naturally relapsed into Russian. The impression remains that Ross executed with a certain gusto the not uncongenial task of breaking to a woman he detested the painful and humiliating truth. He told her bluntly that she had no right to occupy Baronata. She retorted that she was living in her husband's house. Ross insisted that Baronata was "the property of the revolution"; and she, in reply, indignantly accused him and Cafiero of filching away her husband's possessions. Gradually he made her understand the history of the whole affair, and her rage yielded to numbing pain. The deed signed by Bakunin a few days before his departure left no doubt. Baronata was legally, as well as morally, the property of Cafiero. Antonia went back to Baronata stunned by the blow. But she did not lack courage, and even dignity of a certain kind. She bowed quickly to the inevitable; and three days later she and her family left Locarno with all their belongings for Arona, which lay further down the lake in Italian territory. It does not transpire whether Ross informed her even now of the whereabouts of her husband.¹

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 209; Ross, *Golos Minuvshego* (May 1914), pp. 208-9.

The first telegram from Bakunin announcing his safe return to Splügen was sent neither to Antonia (throughout this time he shrank guiltily from direct communication with his deceived and injured wife) nor to Bellerio, but to his Russian friend Zaitsev. It was followed by a further telegram and letter to Bellerio, in which he begged that Cafiero would come and meet him at Splügen. He was penniless, and could not move from his temporary refuge until somebody brought or sent him money. His communications produced no immediate answer. It was not till August 21st, after a full week of anxious waiting, that Ross appeared at Splügen; and he brought neither ready cash nor news of Cafiero. His visit served no purpose but still further to embitter the old man against him. Two days later two further visitors arrived, Sofia Losowska and Bellerio. Antonia at Arona had just learned the news of her husband's return, and had sent them to find him. It was true that Antonia was indifferent to the revolution and unfaithful to her husband, but her strange relationship to him did not exclude a sincere and compassionate affection for the wayward giant.¹

Still Bakunin could not make up his mind to return. His revolutionary ambitions were even now not entirely quenched. He talked airily of trying his fortunes once more in Italy, and spent many hours of enforced idleness at Splügen devising new plans and secret codes. His mood varied. Sometimes he talked of emigrating to America and becoming naturalised there; but when he heard that Antonia was thinking of going to Naples to join Gambuzzi, it seemed as if his one ambition was to dissuade her from taking this decisive step. His mind, enfeebled and distracted by the moral torments of the last month, had almost ceased to work coherently. The one fixed point to which he clung was his desire to see Cafiero. His brain still failed to grasp the radical change which had taken place both in Cafiero's fortunes and in his feelings; and his main hope was to obtain from his former friend the funds which were necessary for the realisation of any of his projects.²

On August 25th he at last received from Ross a "caddish letter" containing the sum of 200 francs, and a message that Cafiero would meet him at the beginning of September at Sierre

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 206-7, 209; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 373.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 207, 209; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 374.

in the canton of Valais. The choice of this remote rendezvous entailed a journey right across Switzerland; and next morning Bakunin set forth, turning his back for ever on the little inn at Splügen where he had spent so many hours of agony. He travelled by slow stages; but when he finally reached Sierre, neither Cafiero nor Ross had yet arrived. A year ago Michael Bakunin had been lionised by the rising generation of revolutionaries in Switzerland, and recognised by them as their leader and mentor. Now he had to travel from one end of Switzerland to the other at the behest of his two young friends, and wait obsequiously till they chose to appear. The watering-place of Saxon-les-Bains was not far away. It possessed a casino which, a few years before, Dostoevsky had sometimes frequented when the gambling fever overtook him. In his overwrought condition Bakunin, too, succumbed to the lure and gambled away 100 francs. It served as a narcotic for his tingling nerves.

Meanwhile Cafiero and Ross had travelled via Neuchâtel, where they had an interview with Guillaume. The latter learned from them for the first time the full story of Baronata, and they handed him the original of the *Justificatory Memoir* which he afterwards destroyed. It did not take Guillaume long to pronounce a verdict against his old friend. He decided that Bakunin had showed in the Baronata affair "weakness and lack of conscience"; and he assured Cafiero and Ross that he agreed with everything they had done. Having thus secured the approval of Guillaume, Cafiero and Ross went on to Sierre. The meeting with Bakunin took place on September 2nd. Cafiero gave the old man 300 francs for his immediate needs and undertook to lend him 5000 for two years at 6 per cent provided his bill were backed by Antonia's sister or some other financially solvent guarantor. The treatment was not ungenerous, and the proviso not surprising; but the interview was necessarily painful. "We are as cold as ice", wrote Bakunin in his diary. "All is over between us." It seemed that there was now nothing left for him to suffer.¹

Bakunin remained at Sierre for another three weeks. He could not return until he knew that Antonia would receive him, and he spent much time writing long letters to her. She and her family were now once more on Swiss soil, having moved from

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 376; Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 209-10, 23

Arona to Lugano. She abandoned the idea, if she had ever entertained it, of joining Gambuzzi. But it is not surprising that she still hesitated to resume domestic life with her husband; for she had too many reasons of late to doubt his sincerity and even his sanity. Her first letters to him were "strange and not frank". Sofia Losowska refused point-blank to guarantee the proposed loan from Cafiero. Bakunin had fits of the old optimism. He would earn "several thousand francs" by writing his memoirs, or "force" his brothers to pay over his inheritance, which could not amount to less than 40,000 francs. But at other moments he knew that he was a broken man. He made up his mind to commit suicide if Antonia refused to have him back. While awaiting her decision he took refuge from thought in the reading of such French novels as he could procure in Sierre. The title of one of them sounded significant and ominous: *Je me tuerai demain*. Ross, the man whom he had lately regarded as his worst enemy, came to see him, and promised to intercede for him with Antonia and Sofia. Bakunin recorded in his diary: "Passed the whole day with Ross. Complete agreement." The vacillations of his mind during these weeks present a gloomy picture of decay.

At last the long-expected letter came from Antonia inviting him to rejoin her at Lugano. He started joyfully on September 23rd, 1874. He stopped at Neuchâtel in order to see Cafiero and Ross. The interview took place in the presence of Guillaume and Spichiger. Bakunin had evidently retained some hopes of enlisting the sympathy of his old comrades of the Jura. He must have known that Cafiero and Ross had already told their story. But it was a crushing blow when Guillaume ranged himself uncompromisingly on their side. Bakunin was now almost past feeling. But he noted bitterly that the one of the four who was most moved was the one who knew him least and who had never been a personal intimate. While the others remained cold and dry-eyed, Spichiger stood in the corner and wept in silence at the old warrior's humiliation. They offered him a pension of 300 francs a month; his former Swiss, Italian, and Russian friends would divide the contribution equally between them. He still shrank from accepting gifts from his enemies. But his pride, though hurt, did not reject "loans". He declined the offer of a pension, and begged Cafiero once more to lend him

3000 francs. Cafiero repeated his consent subject to the former condition of an acceptable guarantor. Bakunin had to admit that his sister-in-law had refused her endorsement; but he still hoped that Bellerio might agree to stand as his guarantor. Then they parted. It was the end of more than five years' friendship with Guillaume, whom he did not see again.¹

Before reaching Lugano, he stopped for more than a week in Berne. He had begun to show symptoms of deafness and Adolf Vogt promised to order a machine for him. He was received by Schenck, one of the Federal Councillors, who listened sympathetically to his desire to obtain Swiss nationality and possess at last a recognised status in the world. But despite the efforts of his friends, none of the Swiss cantons showed any eagerness to enrol this notorious adventurer in the number of its citizens. Michael Bakunin died as he had lived—a stateless exile.

He arrived at Lugano in the early hours of the morning of October 7th, 1874. Antonia, Sofia, and old Ksaweri Kwiatkowski, as well as the two elder children, were waiting for him. "An excellent room, warm and sincere friendship", he wrote in his diary with evident relief. The buffetings of the past weeks had destroyed his faith in human kindness, and he had looked forward not without apprehension to the welcome he would receive at the domestic hearth. His odyssey was over. His fierce passions and dynamic energy were spent at last. He asked now for nothing more than to be left to die in peace.²

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 235-7.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 258; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 387.

CHAPTER 34

THE DEATH OF A *RENTIER*

THE friendly reception and calm atmosphere of Lugano were balm to Bakunin's wounded spirit. His natural buoyancy at once revived. Two days after his return, his wit was keen enough to head a letter to Bellerio with a self-mocking quotation from Béranger:

Me revoilà, peuple fidèle,
Qui m'avez donné mon congé,
Pardon, si la goutte cruelle
M'ôte le peu d'esprit que j'ai.

On reflexion, he was content to attribute his recent misfortunes impartially to his own "stupidity", to Cafiero's "animal block-headedness", and to Ross's "profound baseness". He wrote a bitter letter to Ross accusing him of having "done everything possible to kill me physically, morally, and socially". Cafiero had been no more than Ross's tool. When three weeks later Ross, who had meanwhile paid a secret visit to Russia, tried once more to approach the old man, Bakunin sent a curt reply in which he referred to his "peaceful and quiet life at Lugano, far from all filthy intrigues and filthy intriguers". He had put that unhappy chapter in his life behind him. But his resentment against the man whom he thought primarily responsible was unusually persistent.¹

Human intercourse was one of Bakunin's primary needs; and it was a need which Antonia and her family could never meet to the full. On November 20th, 1874—it was St. Michael's Day by the old Russian calendar—he gave a "princely" banquet, for which the Bellerios, father and son, came over specially from Locarno. But he could not rely on such extraneous guests. In his sixty-first year, and with only eighteen months to live, Bakunin had to create for himself a new circle of friends. Among those whom he now gathered round him in Lugano were a

¹ Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 389-91, 395; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Drago-manov, 351; Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 256.

professor named Pederzoli, a follower of Mazzini who, having been driven from Italy, lived by giving lessons in Italian; Nabruzzi, who had played a brief rôle in the tragi-comedy of Baronata, but had somehow escaped the enmity which Bakunin reserved for the other participators in the affair; and Arthur Arnoud, a refugee from the Paris Commune. In 1875 he received the visit of a young Russian revolutionary named Kravchinsky, afterwards famous in many countries under the *nom de guerre* of Stepniak. In January 1876 Benoît Malon, whom Bakunin had not seen since 1871, settled in Lugano and was soon joined by Madame de Champseix. But none of these were much more than passing acquaintances. Friendship no longer struck roots so readily and so deeply as in the days of his prime; and during these closing months of his life Bakunin was at heart a lonely man. Gambuzzi came from time to time, and a room was kept always ready for him; but his presence can have given little consolation to Antonia's husband. Those whose devotion touched Bakunin most were a group of local Italian working-men, who would listen spell-bound when he talked to them of the revolutionary cause, who tended him when he was ailing, and brought him delicacies to eat which he could not himself afford. Bakunin had always been at home among those who worked with their hands. These men—perhaps the only ones who now regarded him without a tinge of that pity which is allied to contempt—were his last disciples.¹

Arnoud, the French *communard*, who visited him at this time, has left the completest account of Bakunin's mode of life in Lugano. He would rise soon after eight and betake himself to a café on the principal square of the town. Here he would spend the morning breakfasting, reading the newspapers, writing letters, and meeting his friends. When he had no money he would obtain what he needed on credit, or even borrow from the proprietress, though when his debts rose too high, he would sometimes be obliged to transfer his patronage to another café. At two o'clock he returned home to lunch, bringing with him, if he had money or could obtain credit, cakes or sweetmeats for the children. From four to eight o'clock he slept. Then he would appear in Antonia's drawing-room and regale her guests with stories of his past exploits. At midnight he retired, and would

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 254, 300, 314, 321.

write or read half the night, ready to begin the same programme again on the morrow. He normally slept, fully dressed, on a plank or camp-bed; and it was rumoured that the famous grey cap, in which he always appeared in public, never left his head.¹

Bakunin was still ready enough to preach anarchism to his new working-men friends or to tell in Antonia's drawing-room the story of his great deeds and greater sufferings of the past. But he had no energy or inclination left for politics, and his lifelong optimism flagged at last.

To my utter despair [he wrote to Élisée Reclus] I have discovered, and discover every day anew, that there is in the masses no revolutionary idea or hope or passion; and where these are not, you can work as much as you like but you will get no result.

The year 1875 seemed to confirm his worst expectations, even in those countries where he had found most disciples. In Spain, Alfonso XII was restored amid general enthusiasm to the throne of his ancestors. In Italy, Garibaldi did homage to Victor Emmanuel at the Quirinal, and even made his peace with the Vatican. It was the age, Bakunin confessed to Bellerio, of "the universal triumphs of the blackguards". He lost even his faith in the essential goodness of human nature. "If there were in the whole world three people," he remarked one day to Pederzoli, "two of them would unite to oppress the third." His hatred of the Church seems in these last months to have outweighed his hatred of the State; for he followed with attention the beginnings of the *Kulturkampf* in Germany, and declared half seriously that he had become "to a certain extent a Bismarckian".

Retirement from active life and the cessation of his political interests had left him with only one ruling passion, "an immense curiosity". "We have done enough teaching, now in our old age it is time to learn again", he wrote to Ogarev, who had settled once more in London with his English mistress; and he recommends to his old friend Kolb's *Kulturgeschichte der Menschheit* (which appealed to him by its praise of the "federalism" of the Greek system of government, and by its condemnation of the "centralised" organisation of the Romans), John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*, and the works of Schopenhauer,

¹ Arnoud, *Nouvelle Revue* (August 1891), pp. 597-8.

which were now his daily reading. A few months later, he begs Adolf Vogt to send him Marx's *Capital*. It is not known whether he received, and once more attempted to read, his old rival's masterpiece; nor is there any evidence how far he pursued his study of the works enumerated in his letter to Ogarev. Of his writings there is nothing to record. A few unimportant political fragments, found among his manuscripts after his death, are attributed without certainty to this period. He told Ogarev, as he had told other friends at intervals for many years, that he was "writing his memoirs". But there is no reason to suppose that he even now translated this long-standing intention into practice. When he settled at Lugano, Bakunin slipped easily and painlessly into the busy inactivity of old age.¹

In one respect, however, he had not changed. He was still in need of money, and still as unpractical and unfastidious as a child in his designs for procuring it. He could not be brought to believe that Cafiero neither could nor would provide him with further funds. When Bellerio came to Lugano for the St. Michael's Day party, Bakunin begged earnestly for his assistance in obtaining a loan from Cafiero. It was in vain that Antonia, who never herself attempted to reason with her husband, implored Bellerio to explain to him that such a request, after all that had passed, was "incompatible with his dignity". Bakunin would not hear of such an argument, and followed a logic of his own. There was, he declared, "no question of a favour on Cafiero's part, but of an act of strict justice". Cafiero, by his conduct over Baronata, had been responsible for placing him in this "terrible impasse"; and it was no more than Cafiero's duty to lend him the wherewithal to escape from it. He characteristically added that he was "almost sure" of being able to repay the money within six months. Other sources were not left untapped. "Let us be brothers", he exclaimed one day to Arnoud. "When you have money, you will give it to me. When I have, I will give it to you." But the wily Frenchman perceived that the second contingency was unlikely to occur, and found the offer unattractive.²

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, ii. 155; iii. 284; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 398, 402, 404, 411; *Pisma Bakunina*, ed. Dragomanov, 347-8.

² Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 254-5; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 394, 414; Arnoud, *Nouvelle Revue* (August 1891), p. 592.

In this as in every other financial crisis of his manhood, Bakunin counted on his favourite *deus ex machina*—the elusive prospect of his inheritance. In November 1874 Sofia Losowska left Lugano to return to Russia; and Bakunin did not fail to charge her with the usual urgent commission to his brothers. She did in fact visit Premukhino in December; and though she received no cash (there is no reason to doubt the constant asseveration of Michael's brothers that they had none), a forest was definitely set apart as Michael's share, the value of which was estimated at 100,000 francs. Whether Sofia or Bakunin himself was primarily responsible for this rosy estimate may be open to doubt. But it is clear that Bakunin, on the strength of Sofia's reports from Premukhino, believed with more than ordinary fervour that he was now at last about to enter upon a substantial instalment of his inheritance.¹

This belief produced results which showed that Bakunin had neither changed his nature nor profited by any of the lessons of experience. He had lost more of his heart to Baronata than he had ever cared to admit, and the catastrophe had wounded more than his pride. He could never be wholly at ease till he had found some consolation. The wealth which was about to flow into his pockets from Premukhino provided a golden opportunity. Without waiting further, he purchased in February 1875 for 28,000 francs (of which 3000 were payable at once, 3500 in April, and the balance in October) a handsome villa and garden known as the Villa Bresso lying on the outskirts of Lugano in the direction of Monte Salvatore. He proffered the usual excuses of the extravagant. If he had tarried any longer, the villa would have been snapped up by some other purchaser. Prices round Lugano were bound to rise in the spring, particularly now that a railway was being built from Milan. He borrowed the deposit money—in part, it would appear, from Gambuzzi. He had no doubt that by October he would have entered into possession of his fortune. In March he wrote an urgent letter to his brothers to hasten the "liquidation" of his property, and by a belated measure of precaution he begged Sofia to go once again to Premukhino in order to "complete everything in a formal business way". His brothers could not resent his pedantic precision; for "in his old

¹ Arnoud, *Nouvelle Revue* (August 1891), p. 599; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 397, 428-9.

age it would be ridiculous for him to be a dreamer”.

The letter of March 1875 is Bakunin's last recorded letter to Premukhino; and as if in presentiment that he would write no more, he appealed to them all “to make a last journey to visit their old brother before his last journey to the grave”. Tatyana was dead. He and Alexandra were “the last of the Mohicans of that ancient world of Premukhino”.

Many, many memories would come to life if we met—are we never to meet again? Yes, I want to see you all, to embrace you all with warm, brotherly love—only come. . . . I invite not only all of you, but my unknown nephews and nieces—all who come will be welcome. But most of all, *you* must come, Paul and Alexis and Nicholas, you can advise me about the arrangement of the house and garden. I want to make here a little kingdom of heaven—the soil and climate, everything is favourable. There will be a mass of fruit and vegetables and flowers, and we will revive the memory of our father's house.

Among Bakunin's papers found after his death was a manuscript headed “Farewell Letter to my Brothers”. It has not been preserved.¹

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The dream of reviving the glories of Premukhino on alien soil was as unsubstantial as most of Bakunin's other visions. The story of the Villa Bresso is a pure parody of the fate of Baronata. Bakunin provided himself with a library of text-books on intensive cultivation and the use of fertilisers, studied chemistry, and ordered a variety of seeds. He felled the mulberry-trees for firewood, and planted in their place row upon row of fruit trees, scattering his miscellaneous seeds between them and digging around them trenches which he filled with fertilisers. These preparations filled him with pride and joy. He saw himself, as he wrote to Bellerio in August, “before the open gates of paradise”.²

But in the autumn darker hues began to predominate, and Bakunin had cause to remember that before entering paradise one has to pass through purgatory. The famous inheritance was still delayed, and the final instalment of the purchase-money for the villa was paid only by means of a loan obtained through

¹ Kornilov, *Byloe* (1925), No. 3, pp. 51-7; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 433; Bauler, *Byloe* (July 1907), p. 71.

² Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 429, 433; Arnoud, *Nouvelle Revue* (August 1891), pp. 600-601.

Gambuzzi from a Neapolitan banker. In October 1875 Bakunin learned from Premukhino that he would receive not more than two-thirds of the sum on which he had counted, and that this amount would be paid in instalments spread over two years. The cultivation of the ground and the application of fertilisers had been so intensive that the whole garden of the Villa Bresso became an arid desert where even grass refused to grow. There was an unusually early snowfall in November, and Bakunin felt that "everything had conspired against him". In December, thanks to a loan from Pederzolli, the move at last took place, and the Villa Bresso became the Villa Bakunin. But before the New Year of 1876 was a fortnight old, Bakunin was writing to Bellerio that his position was impossible. There was not a farthing in the house, and he was borrowing fifteen or twenty francs here and there, so that Antonia could buy food.¹

Bakunin's health was now failing fast; and as physical decay narrowed the bounds of his consciousness, there was less place than ever within them for the trivial embarrassments of everyday life. In addition to the asthma and the cardiac weakness which had been chronic for three or four years, and the deafness which troubled him for the past twelve months, fresh symptoms of disease now declared themselves. He began to suffer from intermittent loss of memory. Dropsical swellings appeared in his legs, making all movement laborious. Most distressing of all, an incontinence of urine tormented his nights and sometimes shocked the children by day; and the local Italian practitioner, whose knowledge of medicine predisposed him to attribute every ailment to a chill and to prescribe the rubbing of the affected parts with castor oil, was at length compelled to recognise a serious inflammation of the bladder. A German doctor was called in. But he only added the diagnosis of an enlarged prostate gland, and could offer no relief. At times both lying and sitting positions were alike intolerable, and Bakunin would be found asleep, bent double across a table—the only posture which afforded him momentary oblivion of pain. Two Italian workingmen—Santandrea, a cobbler, and Mazzotti, a refugee of the Bologna insurrection—took it in turns to come, morning and evening, to help him dress and undress. Bakunin treated these

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 300, 313, 320; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, pp. 429, 433-4.

physical tortures, as he always treated his financial disorders, with a kind of gentle, tolerant contempt, yielding to them when he must, but promptly forgetting them when they gave him a moment's respite, making outrageous puns on the medical names of his ailments, jesting, studying, preaching, with intermittent flashes of his old fire, though with rather more than his old inconsequence. He was, in Pederzoli's words, "a child, a barbarian, and a scholar all at once".¹

Instinctively, as the end of his life approached, he made his peace with the world. In September 1875, just a year after the rupture, Ross came to Lugano. After a certain initial "dryness", he was amicably received and spent a whole week in the town, though he met Bakunin only at the café in order to avoid a confrontation with Antonia. About the same time, a business occasion brought about a reconciliation with Cafiero. Cafiero, who was leaving Locarno to seek employment in Italy, offered some of the Baronata furniture to Bakunin on easy terms for the Villa Bresso. To complete the deal, Bakunin actually went over to Baronata. A fortnight later, Cafiero returned the visit with his wife. They did not even disdain to meet Antonia, and the "best relations" were re-established—only to be broken for ever by Cafiero's departure for Italy. More ancient animosities had also melted away. One day somebody mentioned Nechaev. Bakunin disclaimed any feeling of enmity against him; for "his intentions were good". There was no time left now for the personal scores of the past.²

In the spring of 1876 a young Russian girl student, Alexandra Weber, came to Lugano. She took Italian lessons from Pederzoli, who soon introduced her to her famous compatriot. Within a few days Alexandra Weber became a constant visitor at the Villa Bakunin. The charm of youth and of his own country never failed to work on Bakunin; and the young girl, who had already caught the revolutionary fever in Petersburg, fell no less quickly under the veteran's spell. The ill-matched pair became close companions. Alexandra Weber succeeded, better than anyone

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 254, 287; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 435-7; Bauer, *Byloe* (July 1907), pp. 68-9.

² Ross, *Golos Minuvshago* (May 1914), p. 211; Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 301-2; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, p. 424.

else in Bakunin's last years, in filling the rôle of friend and confidante; and the record she has left gives us our most intimate glimpse of the closing weeks of Bakunin's life.

The Bakunin household fell into two sections, living and moving in different worlds. On the one side were Bakunin and his now rare visitors; on the other, Antonia and her family. Bakunin would play with the children, especially with the two girls, and give them chocolate and help them to collect wood in the garden for bonfires. But when he addressed Antonia, she would as often as not turn away her "finely sculptured head" in complete indifference. Bakunin lived, and received his guests, in a single room. On a long table by the door there would be a samovar and tea-service, continuously in use; a little heap of tobacco to be rolled into cigarettes; an inkpot standing on an open newspaper; fragments of children's toys and pieces of chocolate. Two other tables and many parts of the floor were piled high with newspapers of many countries and in many languages, manuscripts, and papers of every kind; and medicine bottles were scattered and half buried among them. The newspapers often overflowed on to the bed—a plain iron frame covered with a woollen rug and scarcely broad enough to accommodate the veteran's massive form, under which it creaked and trembled as he moved. Alexandra Weber noticed with indignation that, in the room reserved for Gambuzzi, there was a bed with a soft mattress, linen sheets, and a silk counterpane.

Bakunin would still talk revolution with his young guest and with the Italian workmen, his last disciples; and then there was a light in his eyes which made them look "green and hard and cunning". But he spoke more of the past than of the future. The thought of the memoirs he had so often meant to write pursued him even now that he had no longer the strength to write them. He told Alexandra that he would dictate the material to her, and she must put it into good French; and to perfect her style for the purpose, he begged her to read Pascal, whom he considered the greatest of the French classics. At other times he lapsed into sheer frivolity. The harmless pruriency which had once nourished itself on Paul de Kock reappeared at this closing stage of his career. Malon and Madame de Champseix were living in Lugano and were frequent visitors to the house. Nothing pleased Bakunin better than to listen, with rapt

attention, to stories of Malon's notorious infidelities. He nicknamed him "the smuggler" and his partner "the customs officer", and chuckled with delight when "the smuggler" was caught out in one of his unlicensed escapades. Alexandra Weber could not conceal her disappointment at these lapses of her idol from her own standards of taste and seriousness.

But most of all, now that death was near, Bakunin loved to talk of his childhood and of the Russia which had once been so dear to him. He loved the frogs in the garden of the villa. For he remembered how they used to croak on a summer evening in the meadows and ponds of Premukhino, and thought them "marvellously musical creatures". At such moments "the hard, cunning light went out of his eyes, and sadness contracted his features and lay like a shadow about his lips". He would ask Alexandra Weber to talk to him about the country. She would tell him of the familiar sights and sounds of the Russian fields and meadows among which she had grown up; and when she stopped he would beg her, like a child, to tell him the same story again, and so she would talk or read him to sleep. It was an immense consolation to have about him, in these closing hours of his life, one of his own people. "No Italian", he exclaimed, "would ever have known how to read to him properly." He thought sometimes of his sisters; but less now of Tatyana, whom he had passionately loved, or of Varvara, for whom he had passionately struggled, than of the gentle Lyubov, whom he had seen on her deathbed. "Ah! Michael," she had said to him as she lay there, "how good it is to be dying! How good to be able to stretch oneself out!" Now he remembered and understood her words. He too felt like that. He had only one boon to crave from his last and youngest friend. If she saw him dying, Alexandra was "not to forget to stick a cigarette in his mouth, so that he might take a puff before he died".¹

But the eternal wanderer was not allowed to stretch himself out and die without yet another upheaval. The last crisis began with Sofia Losowska's return to Lugano from Russia at the beginning of May 1876. She had at last succeeded in realising the forest-land which had been allotted to Michael by his brothers as his share of the estate. The first 1000 roubles had been sent in advance two months ago; and Sofia brought with her the

¹ Bauler, *Byloe* (July 1907), pp. 66-87.

balance of 7000 roubles—Michael's whole present and prospective fortune. This stroke of hard reality dissipated his airy dreams of a fortune ten times as large, and left him hopelessly and irrevocably insolvent. There was a family council, at which Bakunin, if he was still capable of feeling, must have drained the cup of humiliation to the bottom. In a last effort to avoid eviction from the villa, he decided to offer his creditors 10,000 roubles in settlement of all his debts, though his plans for making up the difference between the 7000 roubles which he had and the 10,000 roubles which he was ready to promise were probably as nebulous as usual. The offer was firmly rejected. The principal creditor was the Neapolitan banker, a friend of Gambuzzi; and it may be suspected that the latter was not displeased at this opportunity of obliging Antonia and the children, accompanied perforce by Bakunin, to join him in Naples. This, once the creditors foreclosed on the villa at Lugano, was the sole remaining alternative.¹

Bakunin acquiesced, rather than participated, in the decision to move to Naples. Its execution depended on the willingness of the Italian Government to admit him to Italy. The Minister of the Interior at this time was a certain Nicotera, who had formerly known him in Naples and even dabbled in his conspiratorial societies. Antonia urged her husband to write to Nicotera begging for permission to reside in Italy and undertaking to abstain from all forms of political activity. Alexandra Weber, uncompromising in her youthful hero-worship and bitterly hostile to Antonia, considered that for Bakunin to write in such terms would be to "renounce his past". But Bakunin had no longer either the strength or the will to resist Antonia's bidding. Unknown to Alexandra, the letter was written; and in the second week in June, Antonia left Lugano for Italy to present the petition to Nicotera and to make, with Gambuzzi's help, the other necessary arrangements for the transfer of the family to Naples.²

Before leaving Switzerland, Bakunin desired to visit once more his old friends in Berne and to consult Adolf Vogt about his manifold diseases. He started from Lugano on June 13th,

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iii. 313, 320; iv. 26; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 434-5.

² Bauler, *Byloe* (July 1907), p. 83; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 435.

1876, accompanied by the faithful cobbler Santandrea, and reached Berne on the following day. Adolf Vogt met him at the station and took him to the hospital. On the same evening he left it—apparently for the last and only time—to visit the Reichels, where he stood leaning heavily against the porcelain stove while Reichel played his beloved Beethoven. From this time onwards, Reichel and his wife were daily visitors at the hospital. They talked much of music. “Everything will pass,” said Bakunin, “and the world will perish, but the Ninth Symphony will remain.” Perhaps the Ninth Symphony took his mind back to Wagner, whom he had heard conduct it in Dresden in 1849; for he expressed disapproval of the musical compositions of his old fellow-rebel. He asked for the works of Schopenhauer. All the philosophers, he explained, had gone astray through treating man as an individual instead of as part of a collectivity. He would not write his memoirs; for who would read them? The nations had lost their revolutionary instinct, and were so frightened of losing what they had that they had become submissive and inert. If he recovered, he would write a treatise on ethics based on the collective principle.

Adolf Vogt had provided an appliance to mitigate the physical and moral distresses of Bakunin’s principal malady. But nothing would repair the damaged organism. His mind was intermittently clear and alert; but there was now no interruption in the rapid progress of physical decay. On June 28th his body ceased to perform its normal functions, and he sank into a coma from which it was impossible to rouse him for more than a few moments. He refused all nourishment except, from time to time, a few spoonfuls of *kasha*, or Russian porridge, which Maria Reichel—the only Russian near him during the last hours of his life—prepared for him. On the morning of Saturday, July 1st, 1876, when the Reichels made their customary call at the hospital, there was no marked change in his condition. But the agony came on quickly and was over in an hour. At midday Michael Bakunin died. In the evening, when Maria Reichel came with a wreath, the body had already begun to change colour.¹

The funeral was on Monday, July 3rd. It was a hot summer day, and the snow-peaks shimmered against a cloudless sky, and

¹ Guillaume, *Internationale*, iv. 32-5; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 437-41.

the scent of roses was in the air. While waiting for the *cortège* to appear, the grave-diggers cracked jokes about the size and weight of the coffin, and the extra depth of the grave they had been ordered to dig for the last resting-place of this turbulent rebel. The coffin was followed by a company of thirty or forty. Various Swiss sections of the International were represented; but there had been no time to notify friends and adherents in foreign countries. When the grave had been filled in, speeches in honour of the dead man were delivered over it by Zhukovsky, the only Russian who took part in the proceedings, by Guillaume and Schwitzguébel, by Élisée Reclus, and finally by a Bernese working-man. Guillaume broke down in his speech and sobbed convulsively, and there were tears in Maria Reichel's eyes as she gazed into the distance. But the whole ceremony struck on-lookers as meagre, perfunctory, and inadequate. It was an un-fitting conclusion that this portent of tempest and rebellion should be laid thus unostentatiously to rest in the peaceful country which had sheltered his declining years. On the day after the funeral the police, anxious to complete the formalities of registration, enquired of Adolf Vogt what had been the deceased's occupation or means of livelihood. It was a puzzling question; and Vogt, unready with any other answer, murmured confusedly that his friend had been the owner of a villa in Italian Switzerland. This seemed to the police a perfectly satisfactory explanation. The dead man was entered in the official records as "*Michel de Bakounine, rentier*".

Some days later Antonia, who had been informed of her husband's death by telegram, reached Berne from Naples. She was coldly received by Bakunin's friends. Maria Reichel treated her kindly. But Frau Vogt merely enquired how she liked Berne, and whether she had been to see the bears.¹

¹ El, *Severnyi Vestnik* (April 1898), pp. 181-2; Guillaume, *Internationale*, iv. 36-7; Steklov, *M. A. Bakunin*, iv. 441-4; Bauler, *Byloe* (July 1907), p. 87.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE sources for the biography of Bakunin are copious, but scattered and sometimes inaccessible.

MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

The largest collection of Bakunin manuscripts is the one made by Dr. Max Nettlau of Vienna, which has recently passed into the possession of the International Institute for Social History at Amsterdam. This collection contains, *inter alia*, all the political manuscripts left by Bakunin at his death. It has not yet been classified or made available to the student. Much of this material was, however, utilised and quoted by Dr. Nettlau himself in a three-volume manuscript biography of Bakunin (1896-1900), of which fifty duplicated and not easily legible copies were presented by him to the principal libraries of the world. (A copy is in the British Museum.) This biography also contains much information obtained by Dr. Nettlau orally from persons who had known Bakunin. A large part of the material contained in these volumes has been reproduced (for the most part in Russian translation) in various works listed below.

The manuscripts of a personal character left by Bakunin at his death passed into the possession of his wife. None of them has been published, and it is not known whether they have been preserved. Surviving members of the family vouchsafe no information on the subject.

A long letter from Bakunin to Herzen (see p. 293), withheld when the rest of Bakunin's letters to Herzen were published in 1896, remained in the possession of Herzen's eldest daughter. It is presumably among the papers which passed, on her death in 1936, to the Russky Zahranični Arkhiv at Prague. But no information has yet been issued regarding these papers, which may include other unpublished Bakunin material.

The Dresden Staatsarchiv contains all the manuscripts found in Bakunin's possession on his arrest in May 1849, together with a mass of documents relating to his imprisonment and examination in Saxony. Only a small fraction of this material has been published.

The Archives of the Ministry of War at Prague contain the diary kept by Bakunin during his imprisonment at Königstein, and many documents relating to his imprisonment and examination in Austria. The diary and some of the other documents remain unpublished.

PUBLISHED SOURCES

The most important printed collections of writings of Bakunin are the following:

M. A. Bakunin, Sobranie Sochinenii i Pisem, edited by Y. M. Steklov, 4 vols. (Moscow, 1934-6). This collection was designed to contain all

the letters and other writings of Bakunin hitherto published in Russia or abroad or preserved in the Soviet Union in manuscript. No research abroad has been undertaken for it; and letters and other works originally written in foreign languages appear in Russian translations. The four volumes already published (out of twelve projected) carry us down to 1861. It is understood that two further volumes have been ready for the press for some time. But there is no sign of their early publication, and it is unfortunately doubtful whether this handy edition will be completed.

Pisma M. A. Bakunina k. A. I. Gertsenu i N.P. Ogarevu, edited by M. P. Dragomanov (Geneva, 1896). This was the first published collection of Bakunin's letters and is confined, with one or two exceptions, to letters to Herzen and Ogarev. The originals of most of these letters are in the Russky Zahranični Arkhiv at Prague, which has been good enough to communicate to me a few passages in them omitted by Dragomanov. This volume also contains a small and rather arbitrary selection of Bakunin's political writings and some biographical material. It is unfortunately full of minor mistakes due to inaccurate deciphering of Bakunin's handwriting.

Michel Bakounine, Œuvres, vol. i. edited by Max Nettlau; vols. ii.-vi., edited by James Guillaume (Paris, 1895-1913). This collection contains the more important of Bakunin's political writings from 1867 to his death and a few of his previously unpublished political manuscripts. Further volumes of this edition were projected, but never appeared.

Materiali dlya biografii M. A. Bakunina, edited by V. A. Polonsky (Moscow, vol. i., 1923; vol. ii., 1933; vol. iii., 1928). These volumes contain a miscellaneous, but valuable, collection of documents (including many Bakunin manuscripts) drawn from Russian, Saxon, and Austrian official archives, from Dr. Nettlau's manuscript biography, and from more or less inaccessible journalistic sources. They are unfortunately marred by much careless or ignorant copying and careless editing.

Bakuninstudien, by Josef Pfitzner (Prague, 1932). A series of essays on Bakunin's activities in 1848-9 based on thorough-going research in German, Austrian, Czechoslovak, and French archives. Many previously unpublished Bakunin manuscripts are printed in full or in extracts.

Ocherki Osvoboditelnogo Dvizheniya 60^{kh} Godov, by M. K. Lemke (Petersburg, 1908). Contains many letters written by Bakunin from London in 1862 and intercepted by the Russian police, together with an account of the ensuing process.

Important material regarding Bakunin is to be found in the following:

Molodye Gody Mikhaila Bakunina, by A. N. Kornilov (Moscow, 1917).

Gody Stranstviya Mikhaila Bakunina, by A. N. Kornilov (Leningrad, 1925).

These two volumes are based on documents from the Premukhino archives, now in the Institute of Russian Literature at Leningrad, and cover the period down to Bakunin's exile to Siberia in 1857. The full text of Bakunin's letters quoted in them is now available in *Steklov's Sobranie Sochinenii i Pisem*. But they still contain important material

not published elsewhere, notably letters from other members of the Bakunin family and from the Beyer family. Bakunin's letters subsequent to 1857 which were preserved in the Premukhino archives are printed in the journal *Byloe*, 1925, No. 3, pp. 49 *sqq.*

A. I. Gertsen, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii i Pisem*, edited by M. K. Lemke, 21 vols. (Petersburg, 1919–25). In addition to Herzen's letters to Bakunin and letters and other works referring to him, this edition contains notes which are full of valuable information for the biographer of Bakunin.

L'Internationale: documents et souvenirs, by James Guillaume, 4 vols. (Paris, 1905–10). Guillaume's reminiscences are a primary source for an important period of Bakunin's career. These volumes also contain quotations from unpublished Bakunin manuscripts in Dr. Nettlau's collection, to which Guillaume had had access, as well as from manuscripts in his own possession, which he subsequently destroyed.

V Pogone za Nechaevym, by R. Kantor (Petersburg, 1922). This useful little brochure contains material from the Russian secret archives relating to the activities of the agent Roman-Postnikov.

The following collection of works or correspondence of contemporaries of Bakunin contains letters addressed to him or letters or other writings referring to him:

Perepiska Stankevicha, edited by A. Stankevich (Moscow, 1914).

Belinsky, Pisma, edited by E. A. Lyatsky, 3 vols. (Petersburg, 1914).

Arnold Ruges Briefwechsel und Tagebuchblätter aus den Jahren 1825–1880, edited by P. Nerrlich, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1886).

Briefe an und von Georg Herwegh (Stuttgart, 1895).

Georg Herweghs Briefwechsel mit seiner Braut (Stuttgart, 1906).

K. Marx i F. Engels, Sochineniya, 28 vols. (Moscow, 1928–). The now almost complete Russian translation of the writings of Marx and Engels, issued by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, has been used in preference to the still far from complete edition of the original texts in course of publication by the same Institute.

The only biography of Bakunin of any great value (other than Dr. Nettlau's manuscript biography) is one by Y. M. Steklov in four volumes (Moscow, 1920–27). This is not an inspired work. It is frequently deficient in sympathy and understanding; and the canons of Soviet orthodoxy compel the author to take sides with Marx against Bakunin on every issue between them. But it is indispensable to the student, if only as a compilation of the available material; and references to it are given in the footnotes in the present biography wherever the original sources (e.g. Dr. Nettlau's biography or obscure journals) are likely to be difficult of access.

Numerous articles relating to episodes in Bakunin's career have appeared in Russian and German periodicals, and there are scattered references to Bakunin in many memoirs of the period. The titles of these have been cited in full in the relevant footnotes.

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